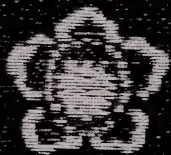




AN
AMERICAN GIRL
IN KOREA

BY ANNIE · M · BARNES



THE MOFFETT
KOREA COLLECTION

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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“YOU DEAR OLD FATHER!” SHE CRIED

AN AMERICAN GIRL IN KOREA

By
ANNIE M
BARNES

Author of
"The Little Lady
of the Fort"
etc

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CARL STREHLAU

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To My Friend

Sadie

*Who, in my opinion, is
Better than a hundred boys*

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An American Girl in Korea

CHAPTER I

NO GIRLS WANTED

"Oh, we're going to have a great time," cried Arthur. "Father says we're going all the way to the Diamond Mountains."

"Yes," added Stephen, "and we'll visit that old monastery up there—the one with the famous Marble Pagoda."

"Oh, I say, Meg, it's a pity you can't go," Arthur exclaimed.

"Why, isn't Margaret going?" asked Cousin Wilbur, as he closed the book he was reading and came over to the others.

"No; how could she, Wilbur?" said Arthur. "Of course we'll miss her dreadfully. But you see it will be such a rough trip; not the thing for girls, at all."

"Oh, indeed, Master Arthur, I like that," began Margaret, her eyes snapping, but Wilbur Ames laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Now, Meg, don't you mind him," he said.

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"Let me handle him. It's not such a rough trip, Arthur. The country we will pass through is almost free now from wild animals, and the people are quiet, peaceful country folk. So there's no great danger that I can see."

"But we are to camp at times, and that's roughing it, as you know," protested Arthur. "There is no one who wants Meg to go more than I do. You believe that, don't you, Meg?" and he wound his arm about her waist as he spoke, and looked at her archly. "But it would make us feel very badly to see you subjected to all manner of unpleasant experiences."

"Pshaw! Arthur," exclaimed Stephen again, "you talk as though a sampan trip up the Han River in Korea in this year, 1902, was as terrible as taking a journey to the wilds of Africa. I am sure Margaret could go well enough, if only she had a girl companion."

"Well," said Wilbur Ames, "we won't talk about it now. It's time for us to go and meet your father, boys. You know he's going to the market-place to see about getting

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the polemen for the journey. So put on your hats, and come along, if you're going. And never you mind, Meg," he added. "Perhaps there will be a way yet."

Margaret, Arthur, and Stephen Vance, fifteen, seventeen, and fourteen years old respectively, were the children of an American missionary residing in Seoul, the Korean capital. The Rev. Edward Vance had worked faithfully for his church and for the cause in which his heart was fully enlisted, with the result that his mission was now in a most flourishing condition.

For two years past a correspondence had been going on between Mr. Vance and his Board at home with reference to the establishment of a branch mission at some point up the Han River, that noble stream, which, rising in Kang-won-Do province, thirty miles from the Sea of Japan, flows almost across the entire country ere it falls into the sea at Chemulpo.

The country was known to be not only fertile but healthful, and the people very orderly and industrious. Moreover, they had been for some time pleading for a chapel, a

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school, and a missionary all their own. Two or three times Mr. Vance had arranged to make the trip, with Dr. Griffin, a young medical missionary in Seoul, but each time something had prevented. He was in the midst of these last preparations when something occurred which caused him not only to hasten all the arrangements, but to change the plan of them considerably. This was the unexpected arrival in Seoul, from the United States, of his favorite nephew, Wilbur Ames. He was now in his twentieth year, and had just finished his college course, but in doing so had seriously impaired his health. His physician advised travel, so to Korea Wilbur came, drawn there by the presence of his uncle's family, whom he had not seen for six years.

When Mr. Vance learned of his nephew's desire to spend much of his time out of doors and to grow sturdy again, a brilliant thought struck him.

"We'll hire a larger sampan," he said to his wife, "double the polemen and stock of provisions, and take the boys and Wilbur. Moreover," he added, his face growing

brighter, "we'll make it a six weeks' trip instead of three, and we'll extend the trip to the Diamond Mountains. There! that will be entertainment and profit enough for the youngsters to do them a year, I think!"

Thus it was that the plans had been perfected, greatly to the joy of Arthur and Stephen Vance and to the delight of Wilbur.

Besides those already mentioned, the missionary's family consisted of his wife, her sister, Miss Philippa Waldren, a young lady of twenty-six, and Ethel, aged seven, the baby of the family.

The ladies were to remain at the mission compound, for neither of them had a fancy for such a trip as was contemplated. Besides, there was good reason why one of them would have regarded it as a most sorrowful journey. They could be perfectly safe and comfortable during Mr. Vance's absence, as there were other missionaries and their wives resident at the compound. Besides, the Vance family had the services of two very excellent native servants, Nak-Tong and Mokpo.

Mr. Vance met Wilbur and the boys at the entrance of the compound, and walked with

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them toward the market-place. "We must get our polemen at once," he said, "for we start in a week. It's a pity the three we had engaged left us so in the lurch. They seemed sturdy, able fellows."

"But very surly-looking, father," said Arthur. "I, for one, am glad they left us, since it let us see just what they were before we had started on our journey and were at their mercy."

"Well spoken, my boy; but I fear this is just the beginning of what we shall be called upon to meet all through our trip. My experience with the Korean character has shown me plainly its lack of stability and, what is worse, its disregard of truth."

"But, uncle," said Wilbur, "they seem to be a very pleasant-mannered people, and so easy-going——"

"That is just it, Wilbur! They are too easy-going. Why, even the emperor, the head of the nation, is sadly lacking in decision. He is a mere puppet in the hands of bad men. Poor Li Hsi! some day his crown will topple off, and he will be like Bopeep, not knowing where to find it, nor even know-

ing how he lost it. But come," he added, "we must hurry if we are to meet Dr. Griffin at the time he set. This is one of the principal market days, and there will be a crowd."

They hastened through the narrow, crowded streets. Men and children and dogs were seen in every direction. Very few women were afoot, and the most of these had an ugly green cloak, cut like a coat, drawn up over their heads and about their faces, with just a crack for the eyes to peep through. On each side a big sleeve hung down like a great flopping ear. What women of the higher class were abroad were not seen, as they were borne by their servants in covered sedan chairs.

As Mr. Vance and the youths walked on briskly they came, after a short time, to a street not far from the English Legation, which was cleaner and more prepossessing than any they had entered since leaving the one faced by the mission compound.

"What an improvement, uncle," exclaimed Wilbur, "on the foul smells everywhere else in this town."

"It is the pungent odor of the cabinet woods you get now, my boy," replied his

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uncle. "In fact, this is called Cabinet Street, and it is here that the marriage chests are made for such young Korean women as can afford them."

They found the market a stirring place. In addition to the city venders, hundreds of people had come in from the country with wares for sale. Most of the merchants were squatting upon the ground with their goods spread out before them. Others used their clumsy, high-wheeled carts as temporary shops, the big-eyed oxen standing patiently as their masters drove bargains. There were straw coops filled with chickens or with young pigs; roots and fruits and vegetables; tobacco pipes, oiled paper, umbrella hats, cords for girdles, Turkey red cottons, flimsy silks, matches, sesamum seed candy, and every conceivable article necessary or otherwise to human existence, all jumbled together, with no regard to class or substance.

A man offered them rice for sale by the handful; another had eggs which were sold by the stick. They were wrapped in straw, placed end to end, and standing out like a stiff club with many notches.

"I think I wouldn't like to buy eggs in Korea, uncle," said Wilbur. "I'd never know whether they were stale or fresh."

"Something one can't tell very well even in America," his uncle replied, smiling.

"I would be afraid I wasn't getting eggs at all," declared Arthur. "Who knows, now, but that those might be stones instead of eggs inside the straw?"

"You might ask the man to let you bear down on them and test them," suggested Stephen.

"No, I thank you. They might be covered by shells after all, and I have no yen¹ to pay for the damage, for of course he would want twenty times what 'twas worth."

They found Dr. Griffin near a booth that had long-stemmed pipes and a varied assortment of pottery for sale. He was in earnest conversation with a man who was peddling ironing clubs.

Wilbur thought these were surely baseball bats, though they were shorter than those with which he was familiar in the States. He was greatly surprised when Arthur told

¹ A Japanese dollar, a coin quite current in Korea.

him they were used by the women of Korea for the purpose of ironing, or rather beating, the white clothes of fathers, husbands and sons into smoothness.

The young physician looked up with a smile. He had a fine, strong face, and his dark eyes were very bright. Yet much sadness had come into the young physician's life, as Wilbur was to learn later.

"I think we have found one of our polemen," said Dr. Griffin's cheery voice as Mr. Vance drew near. "This is Mr. Kang-see, or Mr. Kang for short. He lives some miles up our river of Golden Sands, and brings down articles of merchandise now and then for the pasang¹ in Seoul. Many parts of the river, he tells me, he knows as well as the fingers on his hand, though he has never been so far up as the first of the monasteries we are anxious to see."

Mr. Vance began to ply Mr. Kang with questions and soon seemed well pleased. The two missionaries made use of the native language, though two or three times Mr. Kang gave evidence of having no mean knowledge of English.

¹ Merchant peddlers.

He seemed a very intelligent young Korean, above the average height, and his person and his dress bore evidence of a cleanliness that pleased Mr. Vance greatly.

"He tells me also," Dr. Griffin said again, "that he is sure there are two young men in his village whom he can get to join him. They are experienced and have been on two or three journeys for some distance up the Han. He promises without fail to have them at the mission compound by dusk on Monday evening."

"We shall count upon you, Mr. Kang," said Mr. Vance politely, "and pray be sure to bring the young men with you if in your power. We want to be off Wednesday morning at sunrise. Now where shall we find the fourth poleman, I am anxious to know."

During the last few minutes, while his father and Dr. Griffin had been in earnest conversation with Kang, Arthur had been scanning the faces of the crowd about them. Soon he became conscious of one man who was very impertinently staring at them, and edging nearer as he stared. This ought not to have given the youth either surprise or re-

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sentment, as the Koreans are a very inquisitive people, and Arthur had been long enough in the country to find that out. He felt, however, thoroughly provoked with the man. He was plainly trying to hear all that was said. "And it is none of his business," commented Arthur.

The man had a bad face, the youth declared to himself, and his almond-shaped eyes gleamed in a way that made Arthur feel decidedly chilly.

Suddenly Arthur saw the man give a start and bend nearer, as though every nerve of hearing was on a tension, and his queer little eyes were shining like serpent's eyes, with a hard glitter,—yes, Arthur was sure of it! His father was speaking to Mr. Kang about the Diamond Mountain section and the monasteries up the Han, especially the one where the Marble Pagoda was, said to be the exact counterpart of that in Seoul, which struck every visitor with such wonder.

The man edged nearer and nearer, his face working with some strange emotion, his eyes like two tiny jets of flame.

"He's truly a queer customer, and I believe

he is after no good!" Arthur said to himself. He turned quickly to the man. "Well, what do you want?" he asked. But without replying the Korean abruptly darted away and the youth quickly lost him in the crowd.

"He's gone!" exclaimed Arthur, "without giving me the chance I wanted to speak to him; but I would know that face again anywhere."

In Korea, where physiognomy varies, it is not hard to distinguish one face from another as it is in China and Japan, so that Arthur made no vain boast. Though the Koreans bear a resemblance to both the Chinese and Japanese, and there is a mixture of the blood of the two races in their veins, as is believed, still the people of the Hermit Kingdom have features, as well as traits, that are distinctively their own. They vary in coloring from a russet brown to a light cream hue, and the eyes of many of them instead of being sloe-black, as are the eyes of the Chinese and Japanese, are hazel and even a dark gray in shade. This man's eyes were of a peculiar shade of deep amber. Truly it would be hard for Arthur to forget them!

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He decided at length to say nothing to his father or to the others until some circumstance arose to justify his speaking. Besides, there was ever the dread with Arthur of being censured for his hasty prejudices.

"I think I can get the other poleman," said Dr. Griffin, as they walked away. "At any rate, I'll try for him. I am going over toward the South Gate to see a sick man. He is one in whom I have confidence. He has traveled much about the country and will probably be able to help us. I will let you hear from me shortly after my return."

Mr. Vance thanked him and turned away with the boys.

"What a fine face Dr. Griffin has," exclaimed Wilbur, when they were on their way back to the compound. "I'm very glad he is going with us next week."

"Yes," rejoined his uncle, enthusiastically. "He's a splendid fellow. You'll like him more and more."

"I should think it would be a sad journey for him," said Arthur.

"Why?" asked Wilbur, in surprise.

But Mr. Vance answered for his son. "I

would have told you about him earlier, Wilbur," he said, "but for the fact that I have been busy and have seen so little of you in the few days you have been here. Dr. Griffin's only brother, Walter Hale Griffin, was drowned while on a trip up the Han River just a little more than three years ago. He was an artist and newspaper correspondent, and was very venturesome, it is said. His body was never found, though most of his effects were fished up from the river. No doubt his sampan was dashed to pieces in the rapids. Many believe his polemen were treacherous—that they deliberately planned his death so as to rob him. He had a servant with him, and he at least ought to have been faithful, since Mr. Walter had saved him from starvation and even from what was worse. Trace of this servant was never found after the accident, though a battered body was taken out of the water near where the sampan was wrecked, which the natives of a near-by village declared was that of Mr. Walter's servant Won-su. Dr. Griffin has never been quite satisfied that all is known that could be known, however, and his chief reason for going with me on this trip is to see

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what further facts can be unearthed. Mr. Walter's death was a great blow to Dr. Griffin. "And to Miss Philippa, too," he added, after a moment. "You probably had not heard that she was engaged to Mr. Walter. It was all very sad, very sad."

They were entering the compound now, and their house was in sight. Arthur waved his hand gaily to some one standing in the door.

"There's Margaret," he said.

Mr. Vance stopped. "Sure enough," he said. "You boys go on to the house. I'll be with you soon. I nearly forgot something."

They had been at home only a short time when Mr. Vance came in. Behind him was a young girl about Margaret's age, whose cheeks were glowing and eyes sparkling as though she knew something very pleasant and couldn't wait another moment to tell it.

"Here, Margaret," said Mr. Vance, his own eyes twinkling, "I've brought Sarah Eliot to talk it over with you."

"Why, father," cried Margaret. "What do you mean? What is he talking about, Sarah?"

"Oh," said Mr. Vance, "nothing much.

Just the trip up the Han River. I have persuaded Sarah's father to let her go with you, for company. But if you don't want her," he added teasingly, "I'll ——"

Margaret rushed at him and hugged him. "You dear old father!" she cried. "And you have been planning this all the time without letting me know. Oh, Sarah, isn't it just the nicest thing? And I'd rather have you than anybody I know, Sarah!" And the delighted girl hugged her friend, and then her father again, and then all the boys one after the other. When she came to Arthur she said triumphantly,

"And now who's going to the Diamond Mountains, I want to know."

"You are, Meg," said Arthur, promptly. "And I'm glad of it."

CHAPTER II

THE MAN WITH THE AMBER EYES

"WHAT do you think," exclaimed Arthur; "Sarah Eliot has been two months in Seoul, and she has not yet seen the Marble Pagoda?"

"The Marble Pagoda!" echoed Wilbur. "What is that? I, too, must plead ignorance. Neither have I seen the Marble Pagoda."

"Then you must both see it at once. This is Saturday, the very day to go."

"But what is the Marble Pagoda?" persisted Wilbur, "and where is it to be found?"

"O it is one of the wonders of Seoul," Margaret laughingly replied; "the wonder, as Arthur believes, and it stands in one of the dirtiest portions of the city, like a pearl in a mud puddle. We shall all have to take balls of tar camphor if we go there," Margaret concluded with an upward little sniff.

"Don't mind her, Wilbur," entreated Arthur. "It isn't any dirtier than places where we have been already. Nearly all of Seoul is dirty, for that matter. Indeed, I think it

should be called the City of Immortal Dirt instead of the 'City of the Ring's Everlasting Seal.'

"But to come back to the pagoda. Really, Wilbur, you are going to be surprised when you see it. Every one is. Even Meg herself was, the first time she set her eyes upon it; so don't mind her chaffing. She is quite ready to go again, despite the bad smells, as you'll plainly see when the time comes," which assertion Margaret herself made no attempt to deny.

"It is more than seven hundred years old," said Stephen, pleased that he could add a point of information, "and no one knows who built it."

"The carvings are magnificent," Arthur resumed. "The most of them represent Hindoo divinities, so that it is believed, and with good reason, that the artists came from India. Mr. Walter, Dr. Griffin's brother, was completely fascinated with the old pagoda. I remember going there twice with him, and I could hardly get him away. He declared that he believed the old place was full of mysteries, secret apartments, you know, and recep-

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tacles for treasure and all that, and upon my word I think so too."

They set off at about ten o'clock that morning for the old pagoda. Unfortunately neither their father nor Dr. Griffin could accompany them. Both knew much of the history of the old pagoda as well as the significance of many of its carvings.

In one of the narrowest of the streets Margaret, who was walking ahead with Wilbur, suddenly paused and motioned her cousin to move nearer the wall to permit a porter to pass. The man was heavily laden with pottery. It was so piled on a great wooden frame, resembling an artist's easel, that it towered four or five feet above his head. The pottery was held in place by thongs of hempen cord wound about it, but despite this it rattled loosely as the man trotted by.

"I don't see what keeps it from falling," said Wilbur. "I certainly would not fancy bumping into him, would you? I'm glad you pulled me aside."

"Oh, nothing would have happened," Margaret replied. "Probably none of the pottery would have fallen. I have seen one

of these porters quickly right his load again, when every piece of pottery seemed tumbling in a different direction."

They had moved on again when Margaret's attention was attracted to a man hastily crossing the street in the direction they were turning. She would no doubt have passed on without heeding him, had he not jostled somewhat roughly against her in the attempt to cross just as she did.

"What peculiar eyes that man has," she said to Wilbur. "I declare they gave me a very queer feeling as he turned his glance suddenly upon me, though I must say he wasn't at all rough in his manner. He drew back civilly enough when he saw that he had jostled me."

"Why, what was the matter with his eyes?" asked her cousin, who could now see only the back of the man's head as he hastened away.

"They are exactly the color of amber," replied Margaret, "and they glitter as though they might be made of glass."

"Why, what a comparison, Margaret!" her cousin replied as he smiled into her face.

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"Perhaps your own glance was somewhat bewitched?"

"Perhaps so, Wilbur," she agreed as she returned her cousin's smile. Nevertheless she had her own opinion.

"There!" said Arthur, as they came suddenly around a jumble of mean and dirty looking huts, "I defy you, Wilbur, to assert that you were expecting anything like this. Doesn't it make you hold your breath, though?"

The pagoda did present an imposing appearance, although the marble of which it had been built was now discolored by time. It had originally been thirteen stories in height, but during the Japanese invasion three hundred years before three of the stories had been removed and placed near by on the ground.

"Why do they not clean up around here?" asked Sarah in disgust, "and let the pagoda stand out conspicuously as it deserves? No one would think to look for it behind all these heaps of wretched, dirty buildings."

"O the natives don't care about it," replied Margaret. "They would rather have the space than the pagoda."

"I wonder the authorities don't take some action in the matter?" exclaimed Wilbur. "It is a burning shame to permit these people to crowd up so against this beautiful thing, shutting off all the view of it with their dirty houses."

"The authorities!" repeated Arthur, looking amused. "You won't be in Seoul many more days, Wilbur, ere you discover that municipal alertness isn't one of the prevailing virtues. People are left to do very much as they please unless it's a matter of having the taxes squeezed out of them."

They walked slowly around the pagoda, not only admiring the beauty of its carvings, but the symmetry of its proportions. Each point aroused fresh admiration. But as beautiful as the pagoda was without, it was even more so within, though its walls were covered by the accumulated dust and grime of centuries.

The roof of each apartment was supported by pillars of stone, every one a mass of carvings. Figures of Buddha were everywhere, with many other mystic deities known to the Hindoo religion. Light came through re-

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cessed windows and through openings where paneled doors had been.

The young people had just come from within the main apartment and were lingering for another view of the old pagoda's beauty. They had climbed to the top of a wall which had been built so near to the pagoda that they could easily lean forward and touch the quaintly carved eaves of the first story. It seemed that the spell of the old building was upon them. Its beauty had tied their tongues.

As Margaret leaned forward, peering through a crevice, she became conscious that some one had entered the apartment they had recently vacated. That was not unusual, she said to herself. Many people no doubt visited the old pagoda every day. Visitors generally heard of it as soon as they reached Seoul.

Another glance, and Margaret saw that this was no visitor to Seoul, but a native, a man in the full Korean dress, white gown, full sleeves, and broad-brimmed hat. Still, his being there struck her as nothing unusual. All about the pagoda were the huts of the natives. No doubt one or more of them used

the pagoda for some domestic purpose. Perhaps this man had his lodging here.

Margaret was about to call the attention of the others to the man's presence in the pagoda, when a sudden movement on his part stayed the words almost upon her lips, and held her with curiosity. He had gone down on his knees and from somewhere had drawn forth a large flat box of dark wood, and was not only muttering over it, but was making vigorous gestures. A hum of voices in a near-by hut and the rapid barking of a dog kept Margaret from hearing distinctly the sounds that he made, but she could see the movements, and they struck her as being very queer.

Something in the man's appearance seemed familiar. He glanced up as though he feared he might be noticed and Margaret instantly drew back.

"Ah, Wilbur, come here," she said. "There is a man in the pagoda; his actions are very queer, and I am just dying to find out what he is doing."

She sprang down from the wall, again signaling her cousin to come. But Wilbur did

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not follow immediately, as both Arthur and Sarah were calling to him to know what was the matter with Margaret.

Meanwhile Margaret was running around the pagoda toward the opening by which she was sure the man had entered. She could not account to herself for the lively curiosity he had aroused, but it certainly was aroused and was leading her into most undignified action.

As Margaret neared the opening, the man issued hastily from it. No doubt he had heard their voices and the sound of her swiftly moving feet. As she noted his rapid exit, she became more fully convinced that he had been doing something he had no business to do. Perhaps he had stolen something and had gone to the old pagoda to secrete it.

As the man caught the sound of her approach, he turned as though unwittingly. For one instant he glanced at her fully. Margaret gave a start that brought her almost to a standstill. The eyes were those of the man who had attracted her so peculiarly in the street.

Arthur came up beside her just as the man

was disappearing around an angle of one of the huts.

"Dear me, Margaret! whatever is the matter? Why, the way you jumped down from the wall and ran around the pagoda made us think you had suddenly gone crazy."

"I heard her say something about a man in the pagoda," exclaimed Wilbur, "but that was all. Where is the man, Meg, and what was he doing to excite you so?"

"You ran away as though you had suddenly been shot out of a gun," laughed Sarah. "Now, Margaret, what did you see to arouse you in that sudden way?"

"I saw a man in the pagoda," quickly replied Margaret. "He no doubt entered the lower apartment just as we left it. At first I thought nothing of it, as there are so many people in the huts crowded about the old pagoda, it was natural to expect to see them make use of it at any time. But he soon began to act so queerly, and he had a box of such strange appearance—large, flat and of a wood so highly polished it fairly shone—my curiosity was quickly aroused. There was something, too, about the man that seemed

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familiar. I just couldn't stand it another moment. I felt that I must see that box nearer and find out what he was doing with it."

"Just hear her!" cried Arthur. "A girl's curiosity! Why, Meg, old Mother Eve herself couldn't have held a candle to you if you had met in the same generation."

"Don't call it Margaret's curiosity," spoke Wilbur at that moment, "but Margaret's spirit! With Margaret to resolve is to act. I don't know what Margaret wouldn't do, once her mind is made up."

"Yes, Margaret is like the terrapin," promptly asserted Arthur, "once she takes hold she never lets go."

"Till it thunders," added Sarah.

"No, not even thunder would weaken Margaret's grip. But where is that man, I would like to know?" Arthur asked suddenly, wheeling about. "And what do you suppose he would have thought of you, Meg, if you had bolted in on him as you proposed? It is a good thing I arrived in time to stop you. Is he still in the pagoda?"

"No, he has just gone around the corner of one of the huts."

"Box and all?"

"He did not have the box, or if he did, I couldn't see it. But that would have been out of the question," she added after a pause.

"What would?" asked Sarah.

"For the man to have had the box without my seeing it. Why, it must be two feet long."

"Then it is still in the pagoda!" cried Arthur. "Come, let us go and see."

"Who has curiosity now?" asked Sarah.

Arthur looked foolish.

"It mightn't be just the thing for us to go back in there," spoke Wilbur. "Some one may live in the lower apartment. Now that we have reason to think so, we might be intruding."

"I am almost sure there is no one living in there," declared Arthur. "We saw no signs of it during our visit a short while ago. Perhaps the fellow stole the box, and we may restore it to its owner."

"That is just what I think," remarked Margaret, "that the man had stolen the box and went in there to hide it. He certainly acted queerly; and he did not come out with the box, I am sure of that."

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"O come on, let's go and look for it!" cried Arthur again. "You two girls will come, I know, for I can see that your curiosity is consuming you. Wilbur, you had better come, too, to take care of us all, since you are the man of the party."

"I see a man peeping around the corner of one of the huts!" said Stephen suddenly.

"Where?" asked Arthur.

"Right over there."

"Is that the man, Margaret?"

"No, it isn't. I think that man is just overcome with curiosity to know what we are doing," and she bestowed a meaning glance in Arthur's direction.

"I would know the man anywhere," continued Margaret; "I mean the one who was in here. He had the most peculiar eyes I have ever seen. In fact, Wilbur," turning to her cousin, "he was the very same one I called your attention to in the street."

"What is there peculiar about his eyes?" asked Arthur, wheeling suddenly toward Margaret.

"Why, their coloring. They are the hue of amber, and they glitter like glass."

“Good gracious me !” ejaculated Arthur, forgetting how opposed his scholarly father was to all such meaningless expressions, and darted into the pagoda.

CHAPTER III

OUT THROUGH THE SOUTH GATE

THEY went into the lower apartment of the pagoda and searched carefully, but could find no trace of the box Margaret had seen.

"Perhaps you were mistaken, Meg," suggested Arthur. "The light is not good in here, as you see."

"I could not have been mistaken, Arthur. The man was directly in front of the opening through which I was looking. In fact, there was a ray of sunlight right across the box. It just danced on the polished wood. Why, I could almost say that the box is of cherry."

"No doubt the man took it away," said Wilbur. "I should think, Margaret, that with the voluminous sleeves they wear they could easily conceal within them articles of no small proportions, and the observer be none the wiser."

"Even a baby!" exclaimed Stephen. Then as he saw them laugh, he added, "Well, you know that has been done. Have you for-

gotten the man father told us about?" turning to Margaret and Arthur, "the one who put his boy baby to sleep and brought him to the chapel service snugly tucked in his sleeve? No one was the wiser till father found it out after the services. The man's wife and daughters had gone to the river to wash, and he did not want to leave the little one at home. Neither did he want the other men to know he was playing nurse."

"I think the man who went away from the pagoda didn't have anything in his sleeve," asserted Margaret. "Indeed, I am sure of it. He held his arms down, and he did not walk as one who was bearing a burden."

"Let us search again carefully in this corner," suggested Wilbur. "The pile of rubbish over there looks as though it might recently have been disturbed."

The pagoda had once been used as a Buddhist temple, and traces of the altar remained. There were two of the upright posts that had supported the railing, and jutting from an angle of the wall a hook where a censer had swung.

"This is one part of the pagoda," said

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Arthur, "that Mr. Walter, Dr. Griffin's brother, used fairly to haunt. It seemed as though it had woven a spell over him. I used to laugh and tell him so. He declared that he believed in ages back he had been a Hindoo himself."

They poked about for a long time among the rubbish, overturning everything that looked as though it might conceal the opening of some secret receptacle where the box could have been hidden.

"I think we shall have to give it up," declared Arthur after a time. "But I tell you what! we'll come back here again Monday, and we'll bring some tools to aid us in the search. The whole thing has aroused my curiosity. I'll admit it, Miss Sarah, and you can laugh as much as you please. Now I'll give you the reason why I grew so excited when Margaret mentioned what peculiar eyes the man had," and he thereupon related the circumstance occurring in the market-place two days before.

"I declare you two make my flesh creep!" exclaimed Sarah. "Quit talking about such uncanny things. There! what was that stir-

ring?" and she gave a little scream and sprang toward Margaret.

"Only a rat, goosey! Take care it doesn't run up your skirt," at which suggestion Sarah squeaked more loudly than ever.

"See the inscription up there," remarked Arthur as they were turning away. "The gilding has worn from the letters, but their outlines are still quite plain, 'Namu, Amida, Butsu!—Hail, all powerful Buddha!' Mr. Walter told me its meaning. It was so sad about his death," his eyes suddenly growing very tender. "He was a splendid young man, Wilbur. I wish you could have known him. In addition to the articles he wrote and the sketches he made for the papers and magazines, he was writing a book, which father says would have been a great contribution to literature."

When they reached home it was to hear the welcome news that the fourth poleman had been obtained for the sampan trip up the Han. Dr. Griffin had at length found him through the agency of the sick man he had gone to see two days before. This poleman, Myo-Sang by name, was an old sampan man

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and understood the business thoroughly. He had been several times up the Han, it was thought to the very farthest point to which it was navigable for sampans and other like craft. If any one could take them safely through the dangerous shoals and rapids, Myo-Sang could. They were therefore fortunate in getting him, his admirers asserted.

On the following Monday morning the young people went again to the pagoda. A lively interest had been awakened within each one concerning the cherry wood box and the mysterious man with the amber-colored eyes. Even Wilbur felt his curiosity considerably aroused. They had agreed that they would say nothing to their elders about the matter unless the box was found.

"Father and Dr. Griffin would only laugh at us," declared Arthur, "and call us a parcel of foolish children."

The box was not found, though they carried the proper tools and made a most thorough and diligent search. If the man had hidden it, he had done so with such cunning they were completely baffled.

At dusk on Monday Kang appeared, and

with him the two young polemen he had engaged at his village. They were pleasant-featured, intelligent-looking young men, and both Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin expressed themselves as well pleased with the selection.

Arrangements were made for a five weeks' engagement of the three, and they were sent on to the village of Han Kang, four miles from Seoul, where the sampan was being provisioned and put in readiness under the direction of Min, Dr. Griffin's trusted Chinese servant. On account of a very dangerous rapid in the river near to Seoul, it had been decided to make the start from Han Kang, going on pony back from Seoul to that village. Such a bustle now as there was, getting ready to be off! Even the exciting incident of the cherry wood box was for the time forgotten.

"We look like a band of robbers, stealing forth to pillage!" laughed Margaret, as they rode away from the gates of the mission compound in the gray dawn. They were wrapped to the chin in rubber coats to protect them from the fog of the morning, and their hats were pulled down over their faces. Many

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tender good-byes had been said and more than one fervent "God keep you till we meet again."

At the last moment Aunt Philippa had drawn Margaret's head to her and whispered something close to her ear, which made Margaret's heart beat faster and her eyes suddenly grow very moist as she answered,

"That I will, Aunt Philippa, you may rest assured."

As early as it was many people in Seoul were up and preparing for the business of the day. Smoke was pouring from dozens of the queer chimneys that were right on the street.

"What have they in those fires, I would like to know?" asked Wilbur, coughing and sneezing.

"Why, straw, to be sure, the universal fuel of Seoul!" replied Arthur who rode next to him. "Look out, Wilbur!" he cried almost in the same breath, "or that water carrier will give you a drenching, and it will be by no means a clean one, let me warn you."

Wilbur turned his pony's head just in time to escape collision with a man who was trotting down the street toward them with a

bucket of water slung at each end of a pole borne across his shoulders.

They were almost at the Great South Gate, through which they expected to pass out, when Arthur turned to his father.

"What do you think can be the matter with the big bell this morning, sir? It has not yet sounded, and you know we ought to have heard its clang a half hour ago."

The great bronze bell to which Arthur referred stands near the centre of the city. It is said to be the third largest bell in the world. It has rung morning and evening for five hundred years as a signal for the opening or the closing of the gates of Seoul, of which there are eight. Without the sound of its mighty booming, which can be heard in all parts of the city, the gates remain motionless.

"I do not know, Arthur," Mr. Vance replied. "Perhaps it has sounded, and we have been so occupied with our own affairs we have not noticed it."

"No, sir, I am sure it has not rung, and it is very strange, for this is the first time it has ever failed, within my knowledge."

When they arrived at the gate they found

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that it was only too true, the bell had not sounded, and there was much clatter of tongues concerning it. Impatience, too, was plainly visible on many countenances. A crowd had gathered both within and without, and it would have been impossible to tell on which side of the gates the greater clamor existed.

Wilbur, on dismounting from his pony to rest himself for the time they would be at the gates, lost his balance, and, in seeking to recover himself, jostled violently against what he took to be a very querulous old lady, who was loudly railing against the tyranny of keeping the gates closed.

"I beg your pardon, madam," exclaimed Wilbur, politely removing his hat, at which Arthur fairly shrieked with laughter. The supposed old lady was a man with clean shaven face and hair done in a knot at the top of his head, as is the custom with married men in Korea.

"Now, Arthur," remonstrated Margaret, "it is too bad you should laugh at Wilbur so. Don't mind him, cousin. It is no wonder you made the mistake. I have done so myself

several times, and so has Arthur, if he would only admit it. When both men and women wear gowns, and men are frequently seen without even the little wisp of hair, the fashion of which they have borrowed from the Chinese, I do not see how any one as unfamiliar with Korea as yourself, Wilbur, can tell them apart."

"Thank you, Margaret," replied Wilbur, looking at her gratefully. "I hope to be even with Arthur yet."

"You'll have to keep your eyes pried open if you do," was Stephen's unsolicited advice.

At last the great bell sent forth its booming sound, and with a clatter and clang the gates fell apart. Rushing and scrambling, the impatient crowd within and the equally impatient one without alike sought to make all the haste possible.

"What imposing looking structure is that yonder?" Sarah asked of Dr. Griffin when they had but little more than ridden through the gates.

"That is the Temple of the God of War," he replied, "one of the very few temples in Korea. Indeed, Miss Sarah, if you have been

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a close observer during the time you have been in Korea, you must have been struck by the fact that, so far as outward signs go, the Koreans are a people without any religion."

"Yes, I have heard my uncle say that, unlike the people of China and Japan, where temples are as thick as cones on a pine, they rarely ever build a temple; that there is only one other in Seoul, and that the erection of both are due to the king."

"You will find it so in all the cities and larger towns of Korea, especially the walled ones," remarked Mr. Vance. "It has been a priestless and templeless land ever since the Buddhists were driven out three centuries ago."

"Why did they drive them out, father?" asked Margaret.

"It was brought about through the Japanese invasion, my dear. Koreans claim that the Japanese soldiers, disguised as Buddhist priests, gained entrance to the city; that they not only opened the gates to others, but that they went about the streets putting the inhabitants to death at the point of the sword. When peace reigned again, the king issued a

decree that all temples were to be abandoned and torn down and all priests banished. That decree was never modified until 1784, when Roman Catholic missionaries were allowed to enter, and finally in 1884, an even more liberal spirit was shown in favor of Protestant missionaries."

"I wonder the Buddhist priests don't come back," exclaimed Arthur.

"They are too well fixed at their monasteries in the mountains," his father replied. "They have planted and watered for years, and many of the monastery grounds are veritable Edens, I understand. Besides, they have now succeeded in getting a hold upon the people of the country and villages, their fees are ample, and they do not wish to give up a sure living to run the risk of a far scantier one in the city."

It was the last of April and the air was delightfully fragrant with the scent of many open flowers. Azaleas, clematis and honeysuckles grew in wild profusion upon almost every hill and mountainside.

At the summit of an eminence a mile or so from the gates, they paused to look back.

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The whole city of Seoul lay stretched out before them. It looked like an immense enclosure filled with innumerable hay ricks—the huts of the lower class—jumbled together, with a structure here and there in the midst of a garden, for all the world like a big barn, which marked the home of one of the wealthier class.

“What is that enclosure near the centre of the city,” asked Wilbur suddenly, “that is filled from end to end with big barns?”

“Why, those are the King’s palaces,” replied Arthur with a laugh. “We must go there, Wilbur, when we get back.”

They found the sampan moored close to the shore at the foot of a slight declivity. All was bustle about it. Figures in white gowns and broad-brimmed hats were moving to and fro, some helping to get the sampan ready for the start; while others again were looking on in idle curiosity.

They had dismounted and were about to proceed to the sampan, when suddenly Margaret heard Dr. Griffin say to her father,

“This is Myo, our chief sampan man. We were truly fortunate to get him, for I do not

know how we could have proceeded up the Han without him."

Attracted by the words, Margaret turned, and there, standing not six feet away from her, was the man with the amber-colored eyes—he whom she believed had hidden the cherry wood box in the marble pagoda.

CHAPTER IV

THE MYSTERIOUS HEAD POLEMAN

It was without doubt the very same man. Margaret could not be mistaken ; his personality had been too vividly stamped upon her mind. The man with the amber-colored eyes who had attracted her attention in the street, and whom she had seen acting so queerly in the pagoda, and Myo-Sang, he who was to be their head poleman during the sampan trip up the Han, were one and the same !

Margaret was so taken by surprise she actually gasped. But she had presence of mind to check the exclamation of dismay that sprang naturally to her lips. At that moment she heard Arthur give a low whistle, and turning, their eyes met.

"It's the very rogue !" he said in an undertone. "Now, what are we to do ?"

Margaret caught his sleeve and pulled him to one side. Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin and the new poleman were in earnest conversa-

tion. Wilbur, Stephen and Sarah had walked on toward the sampan.

"Let us be careful," whispered Margaret, "or he might hear."

"I don't see anything we can do," said Arthur after a moment, "at least, not at present."

"You mean now the man is here, he will have to go on with us?"

"Yes, that is it. There is no other way just now, Margaret."

"O but, Arthur, the very sight of him makes me shiver. I am sure he is after no good here."

"Now, Meg, let us be reasonable. We really don't know a thing against this man, except that his actions on two occasions have seemed to us suspicious. That he was doing what he had no business to do has not been proven by any means, except the time he displayed such curiosity in the market-place."

"But there are his eyes, Arthur! What dreadful eyes he has! The very thought of them makes me grow cold."

"But, my dear Margaret, the man can't

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help his eyes! And it would upset all our plans, I am sure," asserted Arthur, "if we were to tell our suspicions now and make complaint of the man. I heard both Dr. Griffin and father say that they really did not know how we could have undertaken the trip up the Han without such a poleman as Myo-Sang. On the north branch of the Han there are several dangerous rapids. Unless the polemen know the channel, there is every prospect that our sampan would be wrecked. Myo-Sang is said to know these unsafe places well."

"Then I suppose there is nothing to do but to keep quiet," said Margaret. "But I can tell you one thing, Arthur," she concluded and with energy, "I am going to watch him, and if I see that old Myo-Sang doing anything I think he oughtn't to be doing, I am going to speak right out to father and Dr. Griffin, I don't care if we are right in the middle of the Han River!"

"Well, I don't blame you for that, Meg. I intend to adopt the same course myself. I'll certainly keep not only one eye but both on Myo. Until, however, we do find him acting

suspiciously, I think our best course is not to say anything to father and Dr. Griffin."

Sarah's voice was heard at this moment calling to Margaret, and she was running up the slope toward them, her face beaming with excitement.

"O Margaret, do hurry and come to see the dear little snuggerly they've fixed up for us aboard the sampan. It is just too lovely for words! And to think it is to be all our own!"

The sampan lay a few feet off shore beneath the shade of a spreading persimmon, gently rocking with the tide that softly lapped the banks. A wide plank, some eight or ten feet in length, carefully secured, with one end on shore and one on the deck of the vessel, gave access to it dry shod. This had been arranged for the benefit of the party that had come over the hills from Seoul. As to the polemen, they waded about in the shallow water to and from the boat with the utmost indifference.

The sampan was one larger than those generally used by the natives. It belonged to a retired tradesman of Seoul, who now and

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then made trips with his family up the Han for pleasure. He had allowed Mr. Vance to have such alterations made in the craft as suited his purpose.

The boat was thirty-six feet long, by seven in width at its widest part, gradually tapering to five feet at either end. It drew eight inches of water, and the narrow deck that ran along each side was just three feet above water line. There was a framework, well secured, which supported an awning of water-tight straw mats. This could be rolled up or let down at pleasure. Near the centre was a cunning little cabin, five feet by seven, which Mr. Vance had fitted up for Margaret and Sarah, and in which their effects had already been placed.

"Isn't it lovely?" Sarah repeated. "How good of your father to think of us and prepare for us so!"

"Yes, he is just the best father in the world!" Margaret acquiesced, her eyes glowing with pleasure at Sarah's praise, "and I am going to tell him so the moment I have opportunity. But, Sarah," she added, her eyes twinkling with merriment, "there's one

thing we'll surely have to keep our minds on."

"Why, what is that?" asked Sarah quickly.

"To sit down before we try to turn around, or else we'll bump our heads every time. Yes, and there's still another. We must never rise too suddenly, for if we do, we're sure to strike the ridge-pole, and then down may come the whole awning."

Forward of the girls' apartment was a similar one to be occupied by Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin, and back of it still another for the boys.

The remaining portions of the boat, except those in which the supplies were stored, were given up to the boatmen and to Dr. Griffin's Chinese servant, Min.

The boatmen's quarters were at the ends of the boat, a small cuddy hole no more than four by five feet. Here they stood during the day to pole, and at night, when the boat was tied up, they curled up there and went to sleep with the greatest apparent comfort.

The supplies had all been carried aboard under Min's direction. He had been working through the day before and since sunrise

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on this day, and he was justly proud of what he had accomplished. He stood at the edge of the sampan to welcome them aboard with the air of the king himself aboard the royal barge. This amused Dr. Griffin very much, and he indulged in no little amount of pleasantry at Min's expense. The more he was guyed, however, the broader grew the smile on Min's face.

The young Chinese was a big, cheery fellow, of nineteen or thereabouts, larger than the men of his race usually are, and with much more regular features. In fact Min was a handsome Chinese youth, and there was that to recommend him which was far better still. He was bright, good-natured, obliging and trusty, and Dr. Griffin, with whom he had been four years, valued him highly.

Min had received an education at the mission-house and spoke English fairly well. There was another thing Min could do well that had given Arthur no little concern ever since he heard that Min was to be of the party aboard the sampan. Min was a royal eater ; he was always hungry.

"Hello, Min," cried Arthur, grasping the hand the young Chinese extended, "plenty to eat aboard?"

"Yes," smiled Min.

"Ducks and chickens and eggs, and a young pig or two?"

"No ducks, no chickens, no eggs," repeated Min, shaking his head, "get them as go along. The doctor man say this best. Get him fresh. Shoot duck in river," and Min held his hands in front of him to indicate a gun; "catch fish, too," he ended, beaming upon Arthur.

"Can we, Min?" cried Stephen. "Catch them from the boat? O that will be jolly!" he added, as Min nodded his head again.

"What!" ejaculated Arthur. "No ducks, no chickens, no eggs, not even a pig? and you aboard, too, Min. O, now I know we're bound to have a famine."

"Plenty rice! plenty flour! plenty meat and fish in cans!" exclaimed Min, "and there's big basket, too, brought from mission-house!"

"O, the basket our mother prepared. Where is it, Min? I feel as hungry as a wolf just to hear it mentioned. You are sure,

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now, Min, you haven't been sampling its contents?"

Min looked reproachful.

"Basket got lock on," he replied innocently, at which Arthur went off into boisterous laughter.

"O that's the reason, is it?" he exclaimed. "She knew you'd be aboard, Min, and that accounts for the lock."

"Arthur, aren't you ashamed to tease Min so," protested Margaret, "when you know he is just as honest as the day is bright," and Margaret glanced at the cloudless sky above them. "You know, too, that if it wasn't for Min, we'd have no cooking aboard this sampan that amounted to anything. Now you take his hand quickly and tell him you are ashamed of all you've intimated, for if you don't, I'll see to it that Min doesn't give you a single nice thing he cooks."

"O if the apology prevents my being starved," exclaimed Arthur, his eyes in a twinkle, "I'll make it forthwith," and he grasped Min's hand with a grip that made him wince.

"If you two girls were to guess a year,"

exclaimed Arthur, throwing his head up with an air of knowing a great deal, "I'll wager you couldn't tell with what this boat is ballasted."

"With sand," ventured Sarah.

"With rocks," added Margaret.

"No ; with neither."

"Then you will have to tell us, as a year is quite too long for us to go on racking our brains for answers."

"Well, then, it is ballasted with money ! with strings and strings of the square-holed copper cash, of which it takes more than three thousand to make the value of an American dollar !"

"O then for once we can put on grand airs and imagine ourselves nabobs !" exclaimed Stephen ; "since we have a boat load of money !"

"But what are we to do for ballast when the money is spent ?" asked practical Margaret.

"Then, no doubt, we shall have to resort to the sand bags," replied Sarah.

"Let us push off at once," Mr. Vance called to his head poleman. "If we are to reach the

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first stage of our journey by sundown, we should start now."

Myo-Sang bowed profoundly, then at once began to issue orders to the under boatmen. He had changed his white gown for his boatman's jacket and trousers of blue cotton cloth, but he still wore his big, broad-brimmed hat. He would change it, however, for one much smaller when there was a rough breeze blowing, or he had to bend with much energy to the poling where the currents were strong.

As soon as she could without attracting his attention, Margaret drew near and began closely to inspect Myo-Sang. His eyes were turned away from her, and she had to confess now that he was rather a fine looking man. His features had an aristocratic cast that she had seen in very few Koreans, and he was much taller than the average men of his race. In fact, Myo-Sang bore himself with an air of ease and grace that had struck others than Margaret with surprise. There was more than surprise now in Margaret's feeling; she was attracted by his appearance. The head poleman did indeed present a most picturesque figure in his boatman's costume, notwith-

standing that his stockings were so padded they gave his legs the swelled appearance of gout, and made them seem as though they would burst out of the low shoes.

Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin had selected the month of May for the trip up the Han because of the delightful weather they were sure to have. In Korea for eight months or more of the year the skies are generally bright. July, August and September are the hot and rainy months. At this season the rain pours in torrents, so that out-of-door journeys of any length are rarely attempted during these months. In May there are few days when the sky is not cloudless, the atmosphere dry and healthful, and the breezes balmy. At the dry season, too, the waters of the Han are low and the channel far safer for flat-bottomed boats than when they are caught by sudden floods.

"O what a lovely stream!" cried Margaret enthusiastically as she leaned over the side of the sampan, trailing her fingers through the water. "No wonder they call it the River of Golden Sands! Just see, Sarah, how beautifully the gravel sparkles. And isn't it clear?

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Why, we can see straight down to the very bottom of the river."

"Well, that isn't so very surprising," remarked Arthur with a smile, "since the water is only three feet deep."

"Is it shallow like this for most of the way?" asked Sarah.

"O no; from what the polemen tell me there are several places where the river widens out like a lake and is twenty or twenty-five feet deep. At other points, however, it is even shallower than this, no more than a few inches in depth."

"A few inches?" echoed Sarah. "Then how are we to go over it in a boat, I'd like to know?"

"I don't suspect we'll float," laughed Arthur. "In truth, I think our polemen will have to drag us over."

"Just see how it sparkles there!" cried Sarah suddenly. "I do believe those are diamonds."

"I wouldn't be surprised," assented Margaret gaily, "since the Han, you know, rises in the Diamond Mountains."

"I do wonder if I could persuade one of

the boatmen to get me a handful of the gravel," said Sarah after a moment. "I want Uncle Arnold to see it. He takes such an interest in such things. I do believe I'll ask Myo."

"Ask any one but Myo," said Margaret quickly, and scarcely knowing why she said it. "I think Myo wouldn't at all fancy wetting his stockings."

"O I never thought of his going into the water in his stockings," exclaimed Sarah. "He could pull them off, couldn't he?"

"No, don't ask Myo," said Margaret again, "he has quite too much dignity for such an undertaking. Ask one of the younger boatmen, Sarah, and I'm sure he will get the gravel for you. But what is Myo doing?"

The question was addressed to Arthur, who, even before Margaret asked it, had had his attention drawn to Myo-Sang.

Myo-Sang was at that moment in the bow of the boat. He was not directing the poling; this duty having devolved for the time upon Kang-see.

Myo was sitting flat upon the bottom of the small cuddy forming the boatmen's quarters,

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and only his shoulders and head were in view. He had taken something from the bosom of his boatman's blouse and was bending over it. As well as they could see it appeared to be a sheet of heavy paper much crumpled and worn. As they looked, Myo began to mutter and to gesticulate with some violence. Then he held the paper at arm's length, and bowing his head between his curved arms raised and lowered it alternately several times in the most mysterious manner.

"O it is some fetish, no doubt," said Arthur. He had no need to whisper, as Sarah had gone to another part of the boat to make her request of one of the young polemen. "Perhaps it may be some charm the mutang¹ has arranged for him to keep him out of danger. Suppose now," added Arthur suddenly, "that we've shipped a maniac along with us."

"O Arthur," cried Margaret with a shiver, "don't even hint such a thing, for mercy's sake. You make me feel as if I had fallen into icewater."

¹ Sorceress.

CHAPTER V

“THE RIVER OF GOLDEN SANDS”

NEXT to the Amnok, now called the Yalu, the Han is the most important river of Korea. It is the great water highway leading from hundreds of interior towns to the Korean Mecca, Seoul the capital. There are two main branches, which are formed by numberless small affluents. It was up the north branch, which flows down from the Diamond Mountains, that our little sampan party had the intention of proceeding.

Stretched along the narrow deck, which was guarded by a railing, Wilbur and Arthur gave themselves up to lazy enjoyment. Wilbur had his Winchester and Arthur had brought his camera, but neither thought of using them yet, though both duck and mallard were flying overhead, and there was no point along the river more picturesque than this one. Stephen had edged himself into the little cabin occupied by his father and Dr. Griffin,

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and was listening intently to their conversation. It was chiefly about the Buddhist monastery in the mountains, a mile or so off the banks of the Han, to which each desired to make a visit, yet feared to attempt it, owing to the well-known animosity of the priests against those who had usurped them in Seoul.

"We might go in disguise," suggested Dr. Griffin.

"Oh, that would never do," quickly replied Mr. Vance; "we must not sail under false colors even to satisfy a laudable curiosity."

"But, Mr. Vance, if the end in view justifies the means, I do not see how it would be wrong, if it ensures safety to us in our search. Some of these priests are not only antagonistic, but they are treacherous, as you know. They do not stop short of harsh measures to satisfy the spirit of revenge, as we have seen in the case of my poor brother Walter."

Dr. Griffin always lowered his voice when he spoke of his brother, and there was in it, too, that reverent tone in which we speak of the dead.

"No, I do not forget it, Charles, and he had truly a narrow escape from a lifetime confine-

ment, which would have been worse than death to one of his temperament. But, dear friend," continued Mr. Vance earnestly, "I do not see how we can, to be consistent with our calling, appear as what we are not. To be open and above board, even at a risk, is, I think, the best way. All of the priests are not treacherous. I have heard of one or two, even at the very monastery we seek, whose lives are a sincere expression of the peace and gentleness of the doctrine they teach. Travelers in peril have been rescued by them, ministered to, and sent on their way again filled with naught but words of blessing for the priests."

"But they were no doubt travelers whose calling did not bring them into conflict with the priests' own. Of course you have heard the many stories of the bitterness of Paik-tu, the abbot of this very monastery we seek? Dear friend, I beg that you will recall that one of the principal objects I have in going on this trip is the desire to find more of my brother's effects, and, above all, to learn more of his last days."

Mr. Vance did not answer immediately;

he was thinking deeply. His sympathies were keen for the young man who had lost his only brother under such tragic circumstances. He was thinking, too, of the young sister-in-law at home whose life had suddenly been darkened by the tragedy on the Han. After a moment he spoke.

“I will say no more, Charles, in opposition to your plan. When the time comes, it will no doubt be shown to us clearly the better and wiser way in which to carry out our desires.”

Meanwhile, Margaret and Sarah, comfortably established on some tarpaulin-covered bales containing supplies, in the forward part of the boat, were intently watching Myo-Sang and making him the subject of a very cautiously spoken conversation. Myo had a surprising knowledge of English. They had discovered that almost at once. He had, too, a very quick ear, and a habit of glancing quickly about him every now and then as though he feared some one was either watching him or making him the subject of remarks. In other words, Myo appeared to be not only a shrewd but a very sensitive man.

Margaret had told Sarah of the somewhat strange circumstance attending Arthur's introduction to Myo, also bestowing the information that he was the mysterious man seen in the pagoda. She had bound Sarah to strict secrecy until such time as the conduct of Myo should compel their speaking out. From present indications Margaret was sure this would not be long. Her creepy feeling had considerably increased since Myo's mysterious behavior with the piece of crumpled paper. What did it contain? Over and over Margaret had asked herself the question, and over and over again she declared, "I will yet find out."

Now that Sarah, too, knew that Myo and the mysterious amber-eyed man of the pagoda were one and the same, she was even more nervous than Margaret about him.

"It will be wise, I am sure," Margaret declared, "to keep a watch on him. Most of these Han boatmen, I have heard, are quite tricky; even worse than that. I cannot forget how poor Mr. Walter's death was brought about through their meanness and treachery."

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"Were they really responsible for his death?" asked Sarah in a hushed voice.

The sad story of this cheery and brilliant young man, whom all had loved so much, had made a deep impression upon her.

"It was never known just how he died! I am sure," Margaret added with a sudden vehemence that surprised Sarah, "there wasn't half enough done to find out about it. Poor Dr. Charles had a serious illness at that very time, and it was three months or more before he could get off up the river. When at last he could go, it seemed that every trace had been covered, that he was baffled at every point of the search. He could recover only a fragment here and there of his brother's effects, though much of these, according to the testimony of some villagers, had been fished up out of the river. He does not know whether his brother's body is at the bottom of the Han or was carried ashore to be buried."

During their first day's trip they found the Han much crowded with sampans and other small craft. Han Kang was something of a congregating place, and many of the less self-

assured polemen made it their terminal point, dreading to encounter at low water shoals between it and Seoul. From this point the merchandise of such boatmen was packed on pony back and carried to the capital.

Most of the craft they met were loaded with produce from the market towns up the river, which was consigned to the dealers in Seoul. There were also scores of craft bound up the river. The cargo of these consisted of salt from the coast and bales of cotton goods sent to Seoul from foreign ports.

The polemen had to exercise great care to avoid certain of the sampans that drove straight toward them in the most reckless manner, and there was more than one shoal the rough channel of which made the hearts of our young people beat more rapidly, but they reached their destination that evening in safety. The sampan was poled to the shore, and they tied up for the night near a village, where, thanks to the mosquito netting they had brought, they passed the time comfortably until morning.

Up to this time they had made use of the contents of the basket sent from the mission

house. On the following morning, however, the young people were clamorous for the services of Min. They wanted a warm meal and they wanted to go ashore for its preparation and eating. But Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin said that the route for the day was four or five miles longer than the one of the preceding day, and they must make an early start. The delay of going ashore for the breakfast would sadly disarrange the plan of reaching the proposed harbor before sunset.

“Min shall cook you a fine lunch aboard,” Dr. Griffin assured them, “and we’ll have it early. There, I see that Kang has already secured for us two excellent fish from the river. When they are broiled as only Min knows how to do it, and we have some of the delicious home-made bread from the mission, and the fruit we purchased on the way, there will be a meal the king himself wouldn’t scorn.”

“I intend to sit by Min and see him prepare those fish,” announced Arthur soon after the sampan had started. “If I don’t, I fear one of them at least will mysteriously disappear after Min has browned it.”

"Oh, if you want to play recluse simply for the sake of your stomach, why, go ahead," laughed Margaret. "We are going to enjoy the river."

Min determined to retaliate a little upon Arthur, for his joking. He pretended to have lost one of the fish. When a great hue and cry, led by himself, was raised at its disappearance, it was quickly located wrapped in a bit of tarpaulin and snugly tucked among Arthur's effects.

"Who greedy one now, I'd like to know?" cried Min hilariously. "So greedy for fish, want to eat it raw!"

At which Arthur with a somewhat sheepish face stole away to join the girls. But the news of the hidden fish had preceded him, and for the next few moments his life was made a torment.

It was not more than an hour later when Min was seen to be in a state of considerable commotion. He was darting hither and thither, pulling over first one bale and another, poking among boxes, and even running in and out of the little cabins, like a hound searching for a trail that had been lost.

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"Why, what is the matter with Min now?" suddenly exclaimed Arthur. "He is acting as though he had lost every atom of sense he ever possessed."

"Perhaps he has really lost a fish this time," replied Margaret, "dropped it overboard. Why, what does ail him? Can he be in pain? Just see the contortions of his face!"

"Perhaps there is something biting him," suggested Stephen. "It may have gotten into his clothes, and he can't get it out again. Perhaps it is crawling up his back." At which suggestion all laughed merrily.

"He has certainly lost something he can't find," said Sarah. "He is acting more like that than anything else. Call him here and find out what is the matter. Oh, I do hope he hasn't let the fish slip overboard when he went to scale them."

"If he had done that," suggested Margaret, "he wouldn't be rushing around the boat in search of them."

"Min," cried Arthur, "come here. What in the world is the matter with you, old boy?"

But Min paid no heed. He had eyes at that moment only for his master, who had just come in sight. He rushed to him, prostrated himself, struck his head once, twice, thrice hard upon the deck of the boat, then, raising his hands in supplication, with his head still bowed, entreated,

“Honorable Master, pity your most miserable servant. I have left the charcoal!”

At first sight of Min Dr. Griffin's lips had begun to curl in a smile of deep amusement. He was used to Min's extravagant displays of ceremony when there was a favor to be asked, and thought this one of them; but no sooner did Min's confession come out than the expression of his face changed suddenly, and he said somewhat sternly,

“What are you telling me, you careless rogue? You have left the charcoal, one of the most necessary articles, behind? Now how did this happen?”

“I know not, Honorable Master. I cannot see how your miserable, wretched servant could have been guilty of such mean, despicable carelessness. My mind is in a maze with astonishment. Truly I saw the bags of char-

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coal put upon the ponies' backs. I saw them, too, at the river. Now where they can be, your sorrowful servant cannot say. He has searched the boat from end to end, but naught of the charcoal can he find."

"The bags have no doubt been stolen by some one in the crowd along the river bank while the sampan was being loaded," remarked Mr. Vance at this juncture. He had approached in time to hear Min's confession of the loss. "Charcoal is scarce in this part of the country, the most of it being brought from points higher up the river, where the forests are dense."

Yes, the charcoal was gone! Min had spoken only too truly. What were they to do? They had brought along a Japanese brazier, a very necessary article on a trip of this kind, but without fuel of the character it consumed, it was of no more benefit than if they had left it behind.

"Perhaps we can shoot a couple of cranes," said Margaret, "with a heron or two thrown in for good measure, enough, at least, to satisfy your hunger, Arthur."

"But how are they to be cooked?" asked

Arthur, taking her banter good-naturedly. "You forget, Meg, that is the main thing."

"Oh, I suppose we can land long enough for that purpose and gather faggots for the cooking."

"And roast them over the fire, as our ancestors did in primitive days," remarked Sarah.

"Why can't we buy some charcoal from one of the junks going down to Seoul with a cargo of it for sale?" asked Wilbur suddenly.

Sure enough, why couldn't they? It was a feasible plan, yet none of them had thought of it before.

Min sprang to his feet highly elated at the thought of finding a way out of the trouble. He at once ran forward and made the loss known to the boatmen, then to the afterpart to tell the two who were there. He begged them to assist him in keeping a lookout for a charcoal junk, and to be sure to hail one in time if they believed it to be such. They must not let it go by, under any circumstances. Noon was at hand and others besides Arthur were beginning to feel the symptoms of hunger. Min himself had consider-

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able gnawing under the folds of his blue blouse.

"If we get not the charcoal," said Min to the boatmen, "and the honorable master goes hungry, then never again will he want to look upon the face of his abased and most miserable servant."

Each promised to help him, and from that moment on through the next half hour a close watch was kept upon every craft coming down the river. Even Myo had unbent his dignity and was on the lookout, having declared that he would know a charcoal craft the moment he saw it, being as familiar as he was with the river.

A half hour had passed, when Myo announced suddenly to Kang, who was in the stern of the boat poling, that he felt assured a charcoal craft was in sight. The evidences were too plain for him to be mistaken. Soon the good news was communicated to each one on the sampan.

"Hurrah!" shouted Arthur, "the fish will not have to spoil now for the want of cooking!"

The junk came on steadily. Evidently she

had capable hands at the poles. When within hailing distance Myo raised his signal and also shouted out his request for a word with her commander. The boat slackened pace for a few moments, while those aboard her seemed to be giving the sampan and her occupants a close inspection. Then the poles were resumed with more vigor and sampan and junk slowly neared each other. In the meantime, the one who seemed to be in authority had shouted back that there was charcoal aboard and they could have what they wanted for a fair sum.

The junk made steady progress, and in a few minutes was within easy speaking distance. Then it was seen that the man who had issued the directions was not the commander at all, simply having charge of the squad of boatmen. He had taken his orders from a higher source, from a man who had not been visible to those on the sampan, but who, the moment the junk had approached to within a few feet of the sampan, arose suddenly and addressed Myo. No sooner had he done this, than a very strange thing happened to Myo-Sang. He dropped in a heap at the

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bottom of the sampan and lay there like one dead. Dr. Griffin sprang to raise him, but the stiffness of Myo's figure prevented him. Not until Mr. Vance lent his aid did they succeed in raising him.

"It is a fainting fit, I think," said Dr. Griffin to those who had crowded about. "I wouldn't have believed it of him; he seems so sturdy. We'll bring him around all right after a little time. I'll attend to him, with Kang's assistance, and do you see to the purchase of the charcoal," this to Mr. Vance. "We mustn't let this opportunity slip."

It took but a short time to make the arrangement with the owner of the junk for as much charcoal as they thought they would need until a village was reached where they were sure of getting an additional supply. The man was quite fair in his charge. He had, too, a civil manner, yet it took but a few moments for him to give evidence that, like the most of his race, he had a consuming curiosity.

"The man in the stern is sick?" he asked.

"He has had only a sudden fainting spell, I think," replied Mr. Vance.

"He seemed to get suddenly frightened at something ; perhaps it was at my appearance," said the owner of the junk again, who had given his name as Pop-hung, and he smiled broadly.

Mr. Vance returned the smile. The suggestion was simply preposterous, since the owner of the junk was a man of somewhat insignificant build and of rather a mild cast of countenance.

"I would like to take a close look at him," persisted Pop-hung.

"There is nothing you could do," replied Mr. Vance. "Our physician is with him."

But this did not seem to be the reason of Pop-hung's desire to have a closer inspection of Myo. Evidently curiosity, and that alone, actuated him. Although Mr. Vance gave him no encouragement to come aboard, he persisted in doing so, and never paused until he stood close to Myo and had a full view of his face.

His own face changed suddenly. There was evil in it now, and he began to mutter and gesticulate in a manner that caused Myo's eyes to open suddenly. It was strange how quickly they did open. Perhaps Myo had not been in

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so deep a faint after all, or else Dr. Griffin's remedies had speedily done their work. At any rate, Myo was now observant.

The two men looked at each other; then Myo's gaze fell and he closed his eyes again. Pop-hung, as if satisfied, turned and went away, but not until he had asked several questions of the polemen. He also addressed two or three inquiries in a suave way to Wilbur and Arthur, who out of curiosity had gone aboard the junk, and met Pop-hung as they were hastening to their own boat.

"I had no business to tell him we were going to the monastery," Arthur said as soon as they were on board of the sampan again. "I think father doesn't care to have that matter mentioned, and I believe not even our polemen as yet have an idea as to our final destination. It slipped out to that man before I thought. What an insinuating way he has! I declare I ought to have a padlock put on my mouth, Wilbur!" at which assertion Wilbur only laughed.

He had heard little as yet about the monastery trip, and he couldn't see why Arthur should treat the matter so seriously.

CHAPTER VI

ARRESTED

MYO-SANG entirely recovered consciousness in a half hour's time, and seemed physically as well as ever. But the shock, if it had been a shock that prostrated him, left him in a dazed condition. His head seemed to be in a cloud, "his mind gone wandering over the mountains," as the Koreans express it. He would sit and mutter to himself, and twice again they saw him looking at the mysterious paper.

"I will find out yet what it is!" declared Margaret.

"Curiosity!" exclaimed Arthur significantly.

"All right, Art," was the good-natured reply, "you can call it curiosity, if you want to. All the same I feel impelled to find out what there is in that paper that is affecting Myo so peculiarly."

"You'll doubtless be none the wiser if you see it," declared Arthur. "It will probably

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be in such hieroglyphics you won't be able to make a single thing out of it."

"At any rate, I am going to try it," protested Margaret. "And Arthur, there is another thing I am determined on doing. I am going to tell father and Dr. Griffin all we know of Myo before he came aboard the sampan."

This she did, but each of the gentlemen only smiled at her and declared, in the most tantalizing manner, that Arthur and herself were two nervous children who had let their imagination run away with their wits. Nothing that they had seen Myo do was unusual. It was true that he did possess a goodly amount of curiosity, but then that was a trait very prominently connected with the Korean race. Each admitted that he had noted the peculiar coloring and expression of Myo's eyes, but that ought not to be entered to the man's discredit. They had found him a clever, obliging man, and he was very intelligent, with a remarkably good knowledge of English. But the chief consideration was that Myo knew well that portion of the Han they especially desired to visit, which none of

the other polemen did. Yes, it was quite out of the question to part from Myo unless he really was guilty of such conduct as would cause them to lose confidence in him.

Margaret reported the result of this interview to Arthur. It was really about what they had expected.

"I dare say they do think us a pair of suspicious children," said Margaret, "but, nevertheless, I can't get over my uneasy feeling concerning Myo, especially now when he is acting so queerly," and Arthur agreed with her.

They each resolved to watch the poleman more closely than ever, "for who knows what may depend on it?" was Margaret's comment.

The next day Kang came to Dr. Griffin and Mr. Vance with the startling information that he believed Myo was going crazy!

"He talks loudly to the spirits," added Kang, "and there is one that seems to hold him fast. It is struggling with his mind, and will carry it away if something is not done."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Dr. Griffin blithely. "The man seems to have a nervous affection

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which has been brought on quite suddenly. It may be only some business trouble that is tormenting him for the time. Relieve him from work for a day or so, Kang. Let him have entire rest. You know this part of the Han quite well, I believe, and I am sure we may depend on you for (a safe conducting of the sampan."

Kang bowed low and retired.

The rest seemed to do Myo good, though he still sat in an abstracted manner in the stern or along the narrow decks of the sampan, at times murmuring to himself and striking his hand upon his breast, where, as Margaret and Arthur knew, the mysterious paper lay concealed. The only thing in which he took a lively interest was the sound of Margaret's guitar.

Almost at the last moment Margaret had made up her mind that she would bring the guitar, and whatever Margaret made up her mind to do she usually did. The young girl was passionately fond of music. She would miss sorely this delightful every-day companion if it were left at home, so she resolved to bring the guitar, even at some physical dis-

comfort. "It may give pleasure, too, to the others," Margaret commented.

"What in the world are you going to do with that thing, Meg?" Arthur asked with a broad smile, as he noted the nature of her burden.

"You will see in time, Master Arthur," she replied gaily, "and, in the end you'll be glad I brought it."

Arthur had cause to remember those words, though at the time he merely bestowed a deeper smile upon Margaret because of their extravagant sound.

Margaret never picked up the guitar, that Myo did not leave what he was doing to come at once and sit and gaze upon the instrument, aroused to such sweet sounds under the touch of the young girl's deft fingers. At such times his face had a rapt expression. It was as though Myo had fallen into dreams, and they were dreams that gave his face an intelligent, refined expression that made those marvel who saw it.

They had heard much of the beauty and picturesqueness of the Han, but despite this were not prepared for the exquisite loveliness

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of the land and water scenery that hour after hour was unfolded before them. During the three days' journey they passed through two or three of the lake-like stretches of which such glowing descriptions had been given them. Arthur tried to secure a picture or two to carry back with him, but the light was too dim for a snap shot, and the sampan could not be held steady enough to give a secure setting for his tripod. He was chagrined that he had to give it up.

"Two or three scenes like these," declared Wilbur enthusiastically, "would make an artist's fortune, provided he could transfer them to canvas with any degree of realism."

"I know one young artist who hoped to do that, yes, tried to do it," remarked Dr. Griffin sadly; "and he was enthusiastic enough to believe that he had succeeded. But alas, his work never came before any appreciative eyes save his own! For all I know it is at this moment at the bottom of the Han. Poor Walter! and he had hoped so much from it!"

There was an unsteadiness in his voice as he concluded, and each of his hearers felt at heart a responsive thrill. It was the first

time the young people had heard Dr. Griffin mention his brother since they had started on the trip.

At the close of that third day's journey Mr. Vance made an announcement that was hailed with joy by the younger members of the party.

"We'll tie up here, not only through the night, but we'll remain to-morrow and the next day and see something of the shore. We need to lay in a supply of fowls, for one thing, and I wish, besides, to ask some questions of the people concerning a village further on, where I desire to begin efforts in behalf of our mission venture. Day after to-morrow being the Sabbath, we'll hold services here."

They slept soundly that night, though Chefoo, one of the polemen, had somewhat shaken their nerves by the information that not long before the place had been visited by tigers. There was one village just below, he added, where the people had had to move away because of the frequency with which tigers had carried off the inhabitants.

"As for that," exclaimed Arthur, "I have

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heard some of the missionaries tell of a time only a few years back when tigers made their way over the walls of Seoul itself."

"You had better quit talking about tigers," observed Wilbur, "or our girls won't sleep a wink to-night for thinking of them."

"Well, perhaps Sarah won't," laughed Arthur, "but I think you can't scare Meg with any talk about tigers. She would just as soon meet one as not, if it came in the way of anything she wanted to do. No, not even tigers would turn Meg back."

"Well, I think they would, Arthur," confessed Margaret honestly. "I wouldn't fancy meeting a man-eater under any circumstances."

"Arthur has a high opinion of your courage," smiled Sarah.

"Oh, you don't know what it is till you've seen it tried!" declared Arthur enthusiastically. "I've always asserted that Meg is quite too fine a fellow to be a girl!" at which bold assertion both Margaret and Sarah ran after him, pelting him with twigs, gravel, and such light missiles as were at hand.

They saw no tigers at this village, though

they did have a view of the tiger hunters, who obligingly donned their uniforms and marched down to where the sampan was moored, for the purpose of filling the spectators with admiration. They did present a smart appearance in their blue uniforms, conical shaped hats, and equipment of long-barreled match-lock guns.

Though the tigers did not annoy them, the people did. They began flocking down to the sampan at daylight. By the time the young girls awakened the shore was crowded with men, women and children, for the women here, it seemed, were used to going abroad. Very few of them had their faces covered.

Every act of the little sampan party was critically noted. The girls especially had had a hard time undergoing inspection. Sarah's hair had called forth the most excited display of curiosity. Men and women alike tried to handle it, to feel its texture, to satisfy themselves that it was real. It was of a light golden color, inclined to curl, and it stood about her forehead in little fluffy masses. For comfort's sake she wore it on this trip

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woven in a thick braid which hung down her back.

"They'll be wanting to cut it off next to hang on the ridge-pole," declared Arthur, "and they'll try to get a part of the scalp too, to insure better luck, see if they don't. Better look out, Sarah, or you'll go home shaven as bare as a Buddhist priest."

"O don't even hint at such things!" cried Sarah. "You are real wicked, Arthur, to do so."

The words were no more than out, when Sarah gave a sharp little scream. Turning in astonishment, they saw that one woman, impelled by a curiosity more consuming than that of the others, had waded out into the shallow water, and reaching over the side of the sampan, was now fingering the braid of hair most suggestively. She gave it a tighter pull, and Sarah screamed again.

"Be as still as you can, dear," pleaded Margaret.

She threw one arm about Sarah as she spoke, in the effort to quiet her, but Sarah was wriggling in such a manner, trying to pull away from the woman, that her efforts

only added to her discomfort. The more Sarah tried to pull away, the more determined became the woman's hold.

"Do let go," Margaret begged of the woman. "You are hurting her very much. If you will only release your hold, she will show you her hair herself. Perhaps she will even unbraid it for you."

"O no, I won't!" cried Sarah, "for then she may try to do what Arthur suggested, cut it off, and a part of my scalp with it."

Sarah was in something of a panic now, and her cries were renewed, despite Margaret's reassuring voice and Arthur's words of encouragement.

"Do hold out a moment or two longer, Sarah, and I'll make her let go," he said.

Others were attracted now to the scene. Wilbur and Stephen, who were in another part of the boat, heard Sarah's cries and hastened in the direction whence they came. So, too, did Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin and two of the polemen. The latter, however, ran only a part of the way, then stood gaping with astonishment.

The cries of Sarah and the commotion had a

strange effect upon the woman. Instead of causing her to let go, they seemed to deprive her of what little common sense she possessed. She stood as one transfixed, her eyes bulged, her jaws dropped, and clinging to the braid for dear life.

Suddenly Sarah twisted away from Margaret. A pan of water was near by in which Min had cleaned the fish served for breakfast. With a frantic clutch Sarah seized it, and with little time to calculate the position of her target, pitched the contents over her head full into the woman's face, partly drenching Margaret and herself as she did so.

With a gasp of astonishment the woman released her hold, and went tumbling backwards into the stream, kicking and splashing like a great fish. A moment later she arose therefrom still gasping and sputtering, and with a little shriek turned and sped toward the bank. It would have been hard to tell which had been given the greater surprise, she or Sarah.

They spent that day and the next one pleasantly at the village, despite this and other trying incidents that befell them through

curiosity. They went ashore, and the people were gathered for the services under two wide-spreading walnuts. They listened attentively, though every now and then they would interrupt the speaker with a fire of questions.

Late that evening Myo asked Mr. Vance,

"Have you paid your respects, Honorable Sir, to the magistrate of the village?"

"No," replied Mr. Vance, "I did not deem that necessary. If there is anything about which the magistrate desires to see us, he would no doubt have communicated with us."

"There you have made a mistake, I fear, Honorable Sir, since no magistrate would pursue this course. 'Tis you who should have sought him. The magistrates greatly value their authority. They expect due deference to be paid to their station. Yes, most truly do I believe, master, that you have made a grievous mistake not to call upon the magistrate."

"What is that old crow croaking about?" Arthur asked of Wilbur. He had not been near enough to catch clearly Myo's words.

"He is telling uncle that he ought to have

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called upon the magistrate of the village before doing anything else."

"Oh, stuff! I would as soon as not believe that the magistrate in this case is a relative of Myo, or what is more likely, our chief poleman is paid a fee to magnify the magistrate's greatness in the eyes of the traveling public."

"He seems very serious about it," observed Wilbur.

A few hours later they had cause to discover what a very good reason indeed Myo had to be serious with reference to the matter.

The next morning as they were preparing for a start up the river a company of yangban soldiery quietly stepped forward from among the crowd gathered on the river bank and informed Mr. Vance that the sampan could not be moved that day. It must stay where it was until permission was given to move it. Furthermore, the soldiers had orders to bring without delay the sampan party, with the exception of its native members, before the magistrate. It was their master's command and could not be disobeyed.

In vain were questions. What had they done? What misdemeanor had they com-

mitted? The mouth of the commander of the squad was as close as that of an oyster. All the information they could get out of him went no further than his first communication. They were under arrest and must follow him to the magistrate's! At Mr. Vance's repeated request it was finally agreed that Myo could accompany them.

"I fear we shall not be able to make ourselves clearly understood by the magistrate without Myo's assistance," Mr. Vance remarked to Dr. Griffin.

When, however, the matter was broached to Myo, he declared with a doleful face that he was quite too ill to venture on the trip to the magistrate's, so they had to fall back on Kang.

"I really am glad it fell to Kang's lot to go with us," declared Arthur. "I, for one, don't trust that old fox, Myo."

CHAPTER VII

THE RACE FOR THE KWAN-JA

ALL the members of the party were filled with grave apprehension concerning the turn affairs had now taken. What could the magistrate be going to do? Of what serious charge were they to be accused? And if accused, would it not amount to a sentence of some kind? Margaret and Arthur knew full well that the Korean laws were a jumble of absurdities and of flagrant violations of justice. The magistrates, especially those in the remote country districts, did very much as they pleased. Each was a law unto himself, and dispensed the affairs of his court accordingly.

However, they tried to be cheerful, and even to joke with each other concerning the situation.

"Perhaps he will order us chopped up as food for the gods," observed Arthur.

"As if he would think us good enough for that!" laughed Margaret.

Sarah tried to join in the laugh, but it was a feeble effort. The truth was, Sarah was inwardly quaking.

"No doubt I am the one," she said with unsteady voice, "who has brought all the trouble. I ought not to have been so hasty in flinging the water over that woman, but I didn't know what else to do. Now that woman has gone to the magistrate with her complaints, I am sure, and there's no telling what he will do to all of us just to satisfy her."

Arthur gave her an encouraging smile.

"Never you fear," he said with assurance. "Very few, if any, Korean magistrates ever bother themselves with complaints of women, unless it be one of their own connection. So, come along, Sarah, and do not look as though your very last day of life had arrived. He won't kill us, rest assured of that; for he dare not. Neither will he put us in prison, for he will be afraid to do that, too."

"Don't be so sure of that, Arthur."

It was his father's voice that spoke, and

Arthur could see from the expression of his face that he held far from a light opinion as to the outcome of this summons before the magistrate.

"We have heard before, my son, of severe sentence being imposed for the most trivial offenses," continued Mr. Vance, "many of the offenders having acted innocently. Some of these magistrates in the interior towns still cling to their bitter hatred of foreigners, and it is their delight to oppress and humiliate them, whenever occasion offers."

"They think nothing of imposing fines of a hundred yen and from one to two months' imprisonment," remarked Dr. Griffin, "for no other reason than to wreak their revenge."

"Revenge for what, sir?" asked Wilbur.

"Revenge upon the foreigners for daring to invade their country—Korea—'the chosen spot of the earth for the chosen people,' Korea the secluded, 'the pearl of the earth.' They gave no sanction to the King's treaty with the nations. To them it is a contract made to be repudiated."

"This is dreadful!" exclaimed Sarah, who was listening attentively to every word.

"What a terrible ending our beautiful trip may have!"

"Let us keep up a brave heart," urged Margaret. "The people are kind. They have shown a friendly interest in us, and yesterday many of them listened attentively to the words my father and Dr. Griffin spoke to them. See how they are following us now! and evidently with sympathy. Sometimes the people," added Margaret in a whisper to Sarah, "rise in opposition to a magistrate's will. Even with his soldiers he could do nothing against the mass of the people."

As they marched up the street, escorted by the squad of soldiers, they presented more the appearance of a party being conducted in state to some function of honor than a band of culprits on their way to the magistrate for trial. The soldiers had on spic-and-span uniforms. No doubt the wily magistrate had preserved them for just such an occasion. Their hats were bound around many times with red. Their shining blue trousers were extraordinarily voluminous; so, too, were their blouses of white slashed with blue. Their muskets had been newly polished, and

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each was carried in a fashion to suit its bearer.

They arrived at the yamen (home of the magistrate) to find that worthy was yet employed in discussing his morning meal. He sent them a cool message to the effect that they were to wait in the outer enclosure until he condescended to receive them. Though they chafed exceedingly, both at the impertinence and the delay, yet they found much with which to occupy themselves during the interval of waiting. The grounds were extensive and stood on a bluff overlooking the river. There were runners idling about in blue coats, wide trousers, padded stockings and bowl-shaped hats, ornamented with red tassels. There were other people, too, awaiting the magistrate's pleasure, and through the openings in the stretch of bamboo palings at one side, our party from the sampan saw numerous women and children peering at them in great curiosity.

After an hour or more the magistrate sent word that he was ready to receive them. They passed through many small rooms, in which men were squatting on the floor, pretending

to be very busy with certain writing materials, but in reality scarcely making a stroke with pen, but passing the hours in smoking instead. They served the magistrate's purpose, however, of presenting a great show to the people of the amount of work the magistrate had on hand.

They found Mr. Chul-sa, the magistrate, sitting on a small, slightly raised platform, his legs crossed under him. He was smoking a pipe with a long stem, the bowl of which rested upon the floor.

He eyed them a moment curiously, one by one, his gaze resting longest upon the faces of the two girls, whose fresh, clear complexions, blue eyes, and masses of fluffy hair seemed to overcome him with astonishment. But Margaret and Sarah did not see the astonishment in his face. To them it was a dreadful frown and it meant trouble for them all.

The magistrate could speak but little English, yet, strange inconsistency! he seemed extraordinarily proud of that little. He had his interpreter at hand, and there, too, was Kang.

He waited many moments as though to impress them by his appearance, eyeing first

one and then the other, and making remarks concerning them to his attendants. He was magnificently arrayed in a pink silk gown, and on his head rested a little shining black cap of horsehair. When he felt they had had time to be duly impressed both by himself and his attire, he singled Mr. Vance out as spokesman and motioned him to approach.

"O poor father! what can he be going to do to him?" whispered Margaret to Arthur, but she need not have had any fear. The magistrate was simply on the point of relieving his curiosity, which by this time was thoroughly consuming him.

"Are you a married man?" asked Mr. Chul-sa.

"Yes," replied Mr. Vance promptly.

"How old is your wife?"

"She is thirty-nine."

"Has she good sense?"

"I have always found that she has."

"How old are you?"

"I am forty-three."

"Is your father dead?"

"Yes."

"Was he an honorable man?"

"Every one who knew him so declared."

"Have you ever stolen at any time of your life?"

"No; never!"

"Are you speaking the truth?"

"Most assuredly I am."

"Have you been in prison?"

"I have not."

"Have you a family?"

"I have."

"How large is it?"

"There are three of my children," pointing to Arthur, Margaret and Stephen, "one other, who is much smaller, is at home."

Mr. Chul-sa made a point of eyeing each in turn very impertinently and for some little time.

"Well, all that I have to say is that your children are like yourself, horrid looking creatures!"

"Just hear him!" exclaimed Margaret indignantly. "Wouldn't I like to pull the old wretch's ears!"

"He deserves it, I am sure," agreed Arthur. "The idea of being so blind to our good looks!"

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Mr. Chul-sa, having taken a rest at his catechizing, went on again.

“Where do you reside?”

“In Seoul, the capital of your country.”

“What business has such a creature as you in Seoul, the capital of my country?”

“I came as a messenger from One who sent me with words of love and good will to your people.”

“You foreigners are always meddling with our affairs,” complained Mr. Chul-sa. “Why don’t you let us alone? Now see here, since you have meddled so in the business of other people, tell me if you are careful enough yourself to appease the spirits of your father and mother by making worship to them?”

Mr. Vance replied that he did not; that such was not in accord with the customs of his people.

“Do not make worship to the spirits of your father and mother? Miserable creature! If you do not take heed the demons will destroy you from the face of the earth.”

At this Sarah sniggered; more of a hysterical act on her part, than aught else, since she was feeling any other way than at ease.

The magistrate turned quickly in her direction, remarking severely that it would really be a good thing if the demons would destroy every foreign man and woman who dared to set foot in the chosen country of the chosen people. As for himself he had never been in favor of having the tablets taken down, which stood throughout the borders of the country, and which declared that all foreigners were cutthroats and thieves, and should be killed on sight. These sentences, which his heat of temper had compelled him to speak entirely in his own language, the magistrate insisted Kang should translate word for word, not only once, but twice, and poor Sarah almost dropped with fear lest her hysterical outburst of amusement had cost them dear.

"What is the name, anyhow, of that country of yours?" he finally asked Mr. Vance.

"The United States of America," was the quiet answer.

The magistrate turned with a contemptuous curl of the lip to a young man standing near, who afterward proved to be his son.

"Do you know whereabouts on the outskirts of Korea such a country is?"

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The young man declared he did not, but thought it must be somewhere over the mountains.

Turning to Mr. Vance again the magistrate demanded the name of the town to which they were ultimately bound.

Mr. Vance gave it.

"Very well then," replied Mr. Chul-sa, "before you proceed any further, I will have a look at your kwan-ja."¹

Mr. Vance started. He hadn't the kwan-ja with him. At that very moment it lay safely locked within the little desk in his cabin aboard the sampan. In the haste with which they had been arrested and hustled off to the magistrate, he had forgotten the kwan-ja. Yet it was a most important thing, the very thing, in fact, he ought to have remembered.

"Your honor," he said quite humbly, "I have forgotten the kwan-ja. But it is aboard the sampan, and with your permission I will go and bring it."

"You will do no such thing," declared the magistrate, "you will remain here."

¹ Passport.

"Then I'll go and fetch it," spoke Dr. Griffin quickly.

Again the magistrate frowned and his little beady eyes had a wicked leer.

"You, too, will stay here," he declared.

Wilbur, Arthur and Stephen in turn volunteered to be the messenger, but the magistrate squelched each with a look and the positive declaration that not one of them should stir from the court room. At the same time he kept asserting that the passport was necessary, that their examination, in fact, could not proceed without it. Yet he would give not a single one of them permission to go and get it.

"He has some object in detaining us," whispered Arthur to Wilbur. "What the object is, he alone knows. It may be, after all, only spitefulness and the desire to put us to all the inconvenience he can. But whatever it is, he is prepared to carry matters with a high hand, I fear."

Here was indeed a pretty pickle! How were they to get out of it?

The little room in which they stood was about twelve feet square. The walls were

formed of bamboo work, hung with screens of paper. The outer texture of the walls was of stucco. There was one door leading into the apartment through which they had passed to reach the magistrate, an apartment where five or six clerks sat pretending to write. These had now crowded up about this door, and were listening to the proceedings with the most acute curiosity. Another door, just back of where the magistrate sat, no doubt led into his private apartments. There were two windows protected by screens of bamboo which could be slid back and forth at will. As the morning was warm they were pushed back, leaving exposed, in each case, an opening of about two and a half feet wide by three in depth.

During this last excited conversation concerning the kwan-ja, Margaret had edged gradually nearer her father. She was now almost opposite one of the window openings and no more than three feet from it.

"Father," whispered Margaret, as the magistrate was deep in the midst of a heated dissertation with reference to the impudence of foreigners in general and of this party of them

in particular, "father, do give me the little key of your desk in the sampan."

"What do you want with it, Margaret?" he asked in surprise.

"O don't ask me, father, only trust me, and do be quick about it, please. There, the magistrate is going to turn this way again! O hurry, father, do hurry and give me the key, there's a dear."

Almost mechanically he obeyed, though he had no more than given her the key than, divining her intent, he essayed to stop her. But Margaret was too quick for him or for any one else within the room who sought to lay a detaining hand upon her.

Measuring her distance, she quickly sprang through the window, so startling a small group of idlers gathered without that they scattered to right and left with sharp exclamations, believing some spirit had suddenly appeared.

Margaret fell upon her knees, but succeeded in partly breaking the force of the fall by means of her hands. The earth was soft, and she was not bruised at all. Quickly leaping up, she sprang away, and began the

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race for the gates, the direction of which she had kept well in her mind. No sooner, however, had she begun to run with full speed toward the entrance, than three men of the group she had scattered, realizing that she was flesh and blood, and, moreover, that she was one of the foreigners, started in pursuit.

A man, in earnest conversation with a woman near a small pagoda in the grounds, started forward to arrest her flight. No sooner, however, had he recognized her, than he stepped back with an exclamation of dismay. The man was Myo, and the woman to whom he had been talking was the very one over whom Sarah had thrown the water the day before. Though she had but a hasty glimpse of her as she passed, yet Margaret was sure of this.

"The old villain!" she said to herself. "What wickedness can he be up to now? And to think how he deceived us about being too sick to come to the magistrate's with us!"

There was now a great hue and cry about the gates as Margaret's intent to escape from the grounds became apparent. All the men in the grounds, save the three who had started

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late in pursuit from the magistrate's window, had congregated at the gates, as though it would take the combined force of them all to stop this one fleeing girl.

But Margaret did not intend to pass out through the gates. As they had entered the grounds of the magistrate, she had noticed a break in the wall some twenty-five or thirty paces from the gateway, and in the direction of the path leading along the river toward the sampan. It had been torn apart for the purpose of repairs, but, as is usual in Korea, the laborers were working at it spasmodically, only as they felt like it.

On ran Margaret apparently toward the gates. But suddenly she swerved from her course, turning directly toward the break in the wall. The men were so sure she was coming toward the gates that they simply stood and waited for her there. Not one of them gave a thought to the break in the wall.

When they did look up, Margaret was almost through the aperture. Four of the men threw down their pipes and with harsh cries darted through the gates and down the road after the fleeing girl. But they were too late.

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Rendered heavy and slothful through indolence and gluttony, they would never overtake swift-footed Margaret, lithe of limb and with the pure blood of splendid health coursing through every vein.

There were still the people of the village to encounter, yet she soon discovered she had naught to fear from these. As the gluttons from the magistrate's yamen quickly gave up the chase, Margaret's race through the village had no further effect on the villagers than to cause them to congregate along the roadway and to stare at her, their eyes distended, their jaws dropped in astonishment.

On sped Margaret and never slackened pace till she dropped exhausted upon the deck of the sampan. She had just breath enough left to tell the nature of her errand to Chefoo, who had been left in charge of the boat and its effects.

CHAPTER VIII

PERSISTENCY REWARDED

ARMED with the precious kwan-ja Margaret set out on her return to the magistrates. She walked now, although her heart was beating fast with the desire to know how fared it with those she had left behind. Another thought, too, gave her some uneasiness. What punishment would the magistrate mete out to her, yes, to them all, because of her direct disregard of his order to remain in the apartment?

A number of the people had followed her to the sampan out of curiosity, and they were now walking along with her as she returned. They made no movement, however, to molest her, though they did ask queer questions of each other concerning her. A few of them touched her clothing, and one or two handled her hair, but there was no effort to harm her.

Half-way to the yamen she was suddenly seized by two of the magistrate's runners, who

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looked very important over the fact of having seized her at last. They compelled her to start off in a jog trot between them for the magistrate's. As they went along they shouted, yelled, and in other ways made a terrible noise; warning the people to keep out of the path of such a dangerous person. Despite her heavy heart, Margaret had to smile to herself again and again over the terrible picture given of her ferocious qualities. They slackened their pace as the gates were reached and went slowly and in great state up to the door. Thus Margaret had some breath left to reply to the avalanche of questions hurled upon her so soon as she returned to the apartment.

"Oh, Meg, how did you ever get out of that window?" asked Sarah. "I nearly had a fit for fear you had fallen on your head and half killed yourself. And such a stir as you made! Are you sure you are all right?"

"I am all right," smiled Margaret, and gave her a hug.

"You splendid girl!" exclaimed Arthur. "Who would have thought of that but you? And did you get the kwan-ja?"

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For answer she held it up with a little triumphant flourish.

"I declare, Margaret, you are worth a whole regiment," declared Wilbur. "The idea of a girl's thinking to do such as that and we, two trifling fellows, standing around like a pair of silly-billies."

"O that was because you weren't near the window," replied Margaret, a twinkle in her eyes. "That gave the inspiration, you see, Wilbur."

"Your act was a rash one, Margaret," her father said, but there was no harsh chiding in his voice. In truth, his eyes regarded her with pride, and there was a tenderness unmistakable in his voice.

Meanwhile the magistrate was clamoring for the kwan-ja. He seemed to think that they hadn't it; but if they had, that it didn't amount to much. He was contemplating a harsh sentence for Margaret. He was thoroughly provoked with her for defying him as she had. He was more than angry with his runners for permitting this slender girl to outdo them. But when he saw the kwan-ja and discovered that it was no common affair,

but had the king's own seal attached, was in fact such as was given only to men of distinction, Mr. Chul-sa at once changed his tactics. He became very affable, even solicitous, declaring he had sent for them only that he might question them as to their proposed route. He wished to give them such information as he could with reference to the dangers in the river, which he now proceeded to do.

Mr. Chul-sa now not only pressed food upon them of a really palatable sort, loudly applauding when both Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin showed how deft they were with the chop-sticks, but he loaded them down with gifts of fruit, rice, eggs and honey. Furthermore, he sent them back to the sampan in great style, heralded by two drummers and three trumpeters, who almost deafened them with their unmusical efforts.

The people came running from every hut in the village. The number of idlers had been considerably increased by the coming in of the workers in the rice-fields for the noon-day rest and meal. They gathered so thickly along the road-way that the runners had sev-

eral times to stop and literally fight for a passage. Even after the sampan was reached, the people continued to line the banks, an eager, curious crowd.

"It is humiliating to be made a show of, especially when one gets nothing out of it!" declared Arthur.

"I think I'll go around and take up a collection," laughed Stephen, "we surely ought to have pay of some kind."

It was now well past noon. They ought to have been started up the river hours before, but where was Myo? Yes, where was Myo-Sang? Every one was asking this question.

"I saw Myo in the magistrate's grounds when I was running for the kwan-ja," said Margaret slowly.

"Why, Margaret Vance!" almost whistled Arthur. "Aren't you mistaken about that? He said he was sick and could not go with us."

"Yes, I know; but Myo was there just the same. He was talking to a woman in the magistrate's grounds, and I almost ran over them."

"Perhaps you were mistaken, Margaret,"

said Mr. Vance at this moment. "In your haste you may not have seen clearly, and you probably took some one else for Myo."

"No, father, I could not be mistaken. It was Myo, and none other. I saw him quite plainly. He started forward, as though to stop me, and when he recognized me, he stepped back in great surprise."

"Well, this is queer!" said Mr. Vance. "I have just learned that Myo left a message for us with Chefoo to the effect that he had gone up the river bank a short distance to get treatment from a friend who understands something of aches and pains, and that he would return very shortly."

"He is an old rogue, sir," declared Arthur warmly, "and you'll find that out before we go much further."

"Be careful, Arthur," admonished his father, "or the other polemen may hear you, especially Kang. We cannot afford to antagonize Myo," he concluded earnestly, "at least, not at this time, yes, this time of all others. Very shortly now we shall be utterly dependent upon him for the safe navigation of the river."

"But, father, it seems to me we could easily find some other poleman this high up the river who would know about the rapids."

"But they might say they did, Arthur, when they did not. The Korean nature is so tricky; it would be dangerous to risk ourselves in the hands of any hastily acquired poleman, unless we knew well his ability."

It was toward late afternoon ere Myo appeared. He came limping and dejected looking. He had fallen and hurt his knee and it had been some time ere he could trust himself to its support. The first delay had been caused by the absence from home of his friend. The search for him had led Myo to the premises of the very magistrate before whom his honorable friends from Seoul had recently appeared. Here Myo bestowed upon Margaret a look which said most eloquently that he implored her to believe the truth of his assertion.

"I don't believe he is telling the truth," declared Arthur. "You can see that by the hang-dog expression of his face. I tell you what, Meg, I am beginning to think that we have undertaken a risky piece of business in

coming up the Han and trusting ourselves to the mercy of its native polemen."

"Surely, Arthur, you don't include Kang. He seems a nice, straightforward young man, and Chefoo, too, appears a well-meaning and honest fellow."

"O Kang is all right; and so, too, is Chefoo, I'm certain. But then neither Kang nor Chefoo knows the Han above Nang-chon. I tell you what, Meg, I am beginning to see more and more plainly just what poor Mr. Walter had to endure from his polemen, for they were treacherous fellows, as it afterward appeared."

"I think they acted more from greed, Arthur. They coveted some of poor Mr. Walter's effects, especially the gold nuggets it is believed he possessed."

"But there is one man who seemed to have been faithful to him, Margaret, his servant Won-su, or so Mr. Walter's letters indicated. What a pity no trace of him could ever be found."

"O but, Arthur, have you forgotten how his battered body was picked up out of the Han?"

"It was only supposed so, Margaret. You may remember that there were two or three men who asserted most positively that the body was not that of Won-su? If he did escape, however, his persistent keeping out of the way is assuredly very queer of him, for there would be no reason why he should do so. Mr. Walter had nothing but praise for Won-su in every communication forwarded to Seoul."

There was no thought of trying to make any further headway up the river for that day. Thanks to the magistrate and to Myo's idling the day had been as good as lost. There was nothing to do but to remain tied up at that point for another night.

Myo was moody and silent through all of the next day. More than once his attention had to be called to certain important details by Kang. There were in the course several swirling spaces of water with rock-ribbed channels, and it was altogether inexcusable in Myo to be so absent-minded.

That day a part of the contents of the sampan, especially portions of their bedding, got pretty badly soaked. They were glad

enough to tie up all day as well as all night at the next village and to give their effects time to dry in the sun. Moreover, it was at this village that Mr. Vance desired to gain certain information concerning the outlook for the new mission venture. His reception by the people was such that he decided to remain two days instead of one.

Services were held twice at this town. At night the people flocked again to the banks to pay their respects and to satisfy their curiosity. Hundreds of queer little lights began to twinkle along the shore. They looked not unlike big fireflies, darting here and there.

"You would never guess what it is they have," Arthur said to Margaret and Sarah. He had just been ashore with Wilbur for an inspection.

"They have long wisps of twisted straw, five or six feet long," continued Arthur. "It is these wisps that serve as torches. The ends are lighted. When it chars, this charred end is taken off by pressing it against the ground. Then in order to make the straw torch come

alive again, they swing it until it breaks into a fresh flame."

The next day Myo was moodier than ever. He poled very little, though he gave many directions to the men. He had long periods of abstraction during which he sat in the stern, gazing out toward the river banks or down at the water by turns. Then he would mutter and gesticulate. Occasionally he would throw his hands above his head in violent movement, as though in pain.

Margaret had watched him from time to time all through the morning, and at last she saw her opportunity. Myo had taken out the mysterious paper and was bending over it. No one was near but Kang, and he was standing up with his back turned toward Myo, and busily poling.

"Now or never!" said Margaret to herself, and began cautiously to make her way toward Myo.

"I feel like a thief or a burglar," she added, "but I can't stand back for that now. I must find out all about the paper."

Myo's head was lowered and the paper was spread out on his lap. Suddenly he raised it,

just as Margaret had seen him do before, and held it suspended while he moved his head up and down within the circle made by his curved arms.

Hastily Margaret crept nearer; then she did not know whether to berate Myo for the concern and trouble he had caused her, or to blame herself for her folly. The paper held aloft by Myo in this tragic manner was nothing more than a pen and ink sketch of himself, much crumpled and soiled, yet so well done that the likeness was still perfect despite the wear to which the paper had been subjected.

It was this same excellency of execution that caused Margaret to give it a second and a much more careful look. Then she stepped back with a suddenness that almost threw her overboard. It was no wonder that she was thus affected, for there, clearly visible at the lower right hand corner of the sketch were the initials in bold, graceful outline, "W. H. G."!

CHAPTER IX

A DISAPPEARANCE

Myo turned suddenly to see Margaret gazing at him, with a face that must have clearly shown him her emotion. He gave a quick start, muttered something unintelligible, and hastily restored the paper to the bosom of his blouse. Then he sprang up and became very closely engaged with the poling.

Margaret was not slow in telling the others of her discovery, and a very earnest consultation was held shortly afterward in the little cabin occupied by Dr. Griffin and Mr. Vance.

The heart of the young medical missionary began to beat rapidly at the prospect of what might prove additional news of his brother. Perhaps this man might even have been with him in his last hour, who knew? What pathetic revelations would he hear?

When, however, it came to the examination of Myo, it was a complete disappointment. He vowed and vowed again that he knew

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nothing of those last days of the young artist and writer. It was several weeks prior to his death when Myo had last seen him. Young Griffin had been at Myo's village. Myo had been so happy as to have given him lodging for a night or two. In return he had made Myo's picture. As to that matter, he had drawn the pictures of others in the village and no doubt in more villages besides this one. It seemed, in fact, to have been a favorite pastime of the young man.

"He was after all the Korean types he could procure. I remember that well," admitted Dr. Griffin.

A strange thing in connection with this picture, however, was the fact that Myo could not be prevailed upon to part with it for any consideration named.

"He must be desperately in love with his own phiz," remarked Arthur. "I really didn't suspect him of vanity, among his other failings."

When they had first begun catechizing him Myo had shown a considerable amount of nervousness. He displayed reluctance, too, in answering their questions. He had heard

of the tragedy on the Han whereby the young artist and newspaper man had lost his life, and he was aware that his death had caused considerable excitement and inquiry. He was therefore afraid that this sudden examination of himself, following the discovery that he had one of the pictures executed by young Griffin, might cause him to fall under suspicion, despite his innocence. When, however, he became convinced that the present examination was merely for the purpose of gaining all the information possible, Myo grew more at ease and showed no further opposition to being questioned. But Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin, after a careful examination of Myo, asserted that it was very clear to them that their chief poleman knew no more than he had told them of Walter Griffin. Yet Margaret was not satisfied.

"Meg's persistence would pull down a stone wall," Arthur often declared. But Margaret was convinced that Myo knew more of Mr. Walter than he would tell. Rigid questioning had failed to bring to light the knowledge she firmly believed he possessed. If this knowledge were ever wrested from him, it

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would have to be done warily. Margaret determined to watch him more closely than ever.

They spent the next day at a small village, where, as usual on the Sabbath, religious services were held.

During the next two days the scenery changed considerably, growing wilder and more rugged. The river made many abrupt turns, running through narrow, rocky channels, with steep cliffs rising almost perpendicularly upon either side. Anon it widened out into a lake-like expanse, where the water was not only deep, but remarkably still. Yet there were at many places, Myo told them, great heaps of upheaved boulders, lying just below the surface. If the sampan ran suddenly upon one of these, it would assuredly come to grief. But Myo was an old Han poleman. He knew just where these submerged rocks lay, and could thus avoid them.

"I am satisfied," declared Mr. Vance more than once, "that if we did not have Myo we would come to grief."

At the next village where they tied up, Myo told them that they were now nearly eight hundred feet above sea level. They

were glad enough to creep under double blankets that night.

The scenery was so beautiful, the air so vigorous and bracing, and the people appeared so pleasant and good-natured, that Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin decided to spend two or three days here. They were first led to this decision through the glowing pictures painted by Myo of the wonderful sights to be seen in the vicinity. For one thing, there was a tall hill which was said to be literally crammed full of gold. Many people had been known to get nuggets out of it, though Myo somewhat reluctantly confessed he had never been one of the fortunate ones.

"Mr. Walter wrote us of some nuggets of gold he had found!" said Margaret suddenly. "He was quite gay about it, and declared he was going to bring enough home with him to make us all rich for the rest of our lives. Perhaps he may have secured them at this very hill about which Myo has told us. Did you ever hear him say that he had been there, Myo?" asked Margaret pleasantly.

Myo looked down for a moment as though to give the matter due thought, then slowly

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raised his head again to announce that he was quite sure the young man with the pictures in his head had never led him, Myo, to believe that he had ever been at the hill with the golden heart.

There was another question Margaret desired to ask, and she asked it now, smiling sweetly at Myo.

“Whereabouts in the neighborhood is your old home, Myo? Am I not right in believing, from what I have been told, that it is somewhere not far from here?”

After a moment Myo confessed that it was at a village further on, though he did not state how much further. There was a reluctance very evident about Myo to give information concerning his old home up the Han.

They had not much more than eaten breakfast that morning when another sampan arrived. It had put in for supplies, as was soon evidenced.

“It is young Ernest Warren,” said Dr. Griffin, “engineer at the gold mines above Nang-Chon, and his polemen. I must go around and speak to him. I want you to know him. He is a bright, clever fellow.

Besides, we can no doubt get some points from him about the river, and the monastery, too, perhaps," he added in a lower voice. "It is true his company hasn't been operating long in that territory—only about a year. Still, he is a young man who picks up much as he goes along."

"Why, he must be something of a jackdaw," remarked Margaret laughingly to Sarah.

"Or like a vender of old clothes," laughed Sarah back.

The young man, however, didn't come anywhere near to filling either of these suggested rôles, as both girls speedily discovered. He was quite young for the position he occupied, not more than twenty-five. He had a bright, frank face which lighted up wonderfully when he was talking upon any subject that particularly interested him, and his manner was very affable and cordial.

He gave them many valuable hints concerning the Han.

"The worst of the rapids are above Nang-Chon," he told Mr. Vance. "Unless you have well-informed and thoroughly reliable polemen, don't attempt it, or you will come

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to grief. The wisest way, if you are not sure of your polemen, would be to complete the journey by means of ponies. It would not be hard to hire at Nang-Chon as many as you would desire."

"Oh, we have the utmost confidence in Myo, Kang, and the other polemen, especially in Myo," Mr. Vance assured him.

"Don't forget that you are to come and pay me a visit on your way to the Diamond Mountain region," he called out gaily to Margaret and Sarah as the sampan was being pushed off shore. "Your elders have made the promise, and I'll await your coming with considerable anticipation. I think the sights might repay you. Besides, there is the added inducement of a handkerchief full of gold nuggets to be carried home with you."

"O we'll come, never fear," cried Margaret cheerily, "especially after that last inducement. I suspect, however, you'll find us so greedy we will not be content with the handkerchief, but will want a sack full."

"Oh, you are welcome to all you can carry away," was the laughing response. Then as the sampan was about to pass out of sight be-

yond some overhanging boughs, he lifted his hat and bowed.

Little idea had any of them of the circumstances under which they were to meet again.

The sampan party spent the remainder of that day in sight-seeing under the guidance of Myo. They found the scenes fully as beautiful as he had pictured them, and the hill, believed by the natives to have a solid heart of gold, threw quite a spell of fascination over them.

"I wish we could bore right through, and carry off a big part of its treasure," said Margaret.

"Well, some one has been trying to do that," replied Wilbur. "Just look here!"

Sure enough there was every evidence of a crude attempt to enter the hill in the search for the gold.

"I wonder how far this tunnel extends," said Stephen. "I have the mind to explore it for a short distance."

As he spoke he produced a match, and began to search for a bit of dry wood to serve as a torch.

"Don't do anything so rash," remonstrated

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Margaret. "You don't know where the tunnel may lead."

"If you don't mind the demons will get you," laughed Sarah.

"Wait until Myo comes around this way and we'll ask him about it," suggested Arthur.

But Myo did not seem to be in the mood to give them information concerning the tunnel. He really knew nothing about it, he asserted. 'Twas said some foreigner had done it years before. Whether or not he had obtained much for his trouble was not known, though it was believed he had gone away quite a rich man. As to the natives, they had never dared to enter the tunnel for an examination, since the very day he departed there had been a violent shake of the hill, felt through all the region round about, and the tunnel had been closed up several feet from its mouth. The people of the neighborhood had declared the demons were angry because the man had begun at the base of the mountain to bore his tunnel, instead of going to the top, where all might see.

There was one question Margaret desired to

ask Myo, but had thought of it too late, that is, too late for that time. She must wait now for the next opportunity. The question was: How did Myo know that the tunnel had closed up several feet from its mouth? Had he been in to see?

"I will ask him early to-morrow," was Margaret's decision, as she was preparing to retire for the night. But when she enquired for Myo the following morning it was to learn that he had asked permission to spend the day with a friend a little beyond the village. He had departed shortly after sunrise.

While they were eating breakfast Mr. Vance remarked,

"We will take a portion of to-day to lay in some supplies. Young Warren told me we would find it a capital place. The farmers are well to do and the prices far more reasonable than in the larger towns further on."

"Do let us help you, father," spoke Stephen.

"That I will, my boy. I was just going to propose that we divide into two parties. Each party can take a certain portion of the

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village, even going into the country beyond, if necessary."

"All right, father. Now let us hear how the parties are to be made up, that is, who shall compose them."

"Well, you, Stephen, may go with me and Kodong," motioning toward one of the young polemen, "and I'll send Chefoo with Arthur and Wilbur."

"Why, isn't Dr. Charles going?" asked Stephen quickly.

"No, he must stay here to see that these two young women don't get into mischief," nodding toward Margaret and Sarah as he spoke.

"And a terrible responsibility I shall find it!" cried Dr. Griffin. "Don't you envy me?" and he tried his best to look like a martyr.

"Oh, Dr. Charles, how mean of you!" cried Margaret. "But never you mind, we'll pay you for that yet."

"I feel quite confident that you will," replied Dr. Griffin, his eyes twinkling. "I am living in anticipation of it."

The two parties set off after supplies in gay

spirits, each with a large basket or other receptacle.

"You must expect to lay bare the whole countryside," said Margaret merrily. "Poor people! they will no doubt have a famine after this."

"O we expect to come back completely filled up," replied Arthur, "and for the next week or two we'll fare like nabobs. You'll see if we don't, Miss Margaret."

In three hours' time Mr. Vance, Stephen, and Kodong returned. They had had splendid luck, and were burdened with all they could well carry. Another hour passed, but there was no sign of Arthur, Wilbur, or Chefoo.

It was now the time for their noonday meal. Min had been busy with his brazier for over an hour, and among other appetizing viands there were the fish caught in the river, all nicely browned and smoking hot.

Another hour, and still the second party sent for supplies remained away. Mr. Vance began to look troubled and Dr. Griffin had risen two or three times in a nervous manner and walked down the pathway in the direction taken by the boys.

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"I fear they went much further than they intended," Dr. Griffin said at length.

"What I fear chiefly," remarked Mr. Vance, "is that they have lost their bearings and are wandering about aimlessly. We'll eat our meal anyhow, for it will spoil if kept longer. We can put aside the boys' share."

Four o'clock in the afternoon, and still no sign of the boys and Chefoo. Mr. Vance began to pace nervously back and forth. Margaret and Sarah looked anxious and worried. Dr. Griffin stepped aside for an earnest conversation with Kang. Would he please go and bring Myo?

Kang was no more than out of sight, when down the river path from the opposite direction, there came the sound of swiftly running feet, of a body fairly tearing through the underbrush. The next moment Chefoo, wild-eyed, disheveled, and panting for breath, threw himself at Mr. Vance's feet. As soon as he could recover speech, he had a startling story to tell. The boys had disappeared several hours before, and he had not the remotest idea where they were!

CHAPTER X

IMPRISONED

Bit by bit they succeeded in getting Chefoo's story from him. He was not only exhausted from hard running, but he was greatly excited. He did not know how much he would be blamed in the matter.

The boys and Chefoo had not been successful at first in their search for supplies, as the inmates of many of the homes at which they had called were away in the rice-fields. Finally, they decided to push on to another village, of which they had heard, lying four miles further up the river. Here, their informants assured them, they would without doubt procure all the supplies they wished. Feeling in splendid trim, the boys did not demur at the long walk, though Chefoo did, and advised going back to get ponies. He knew where a man lived who would let them have the ponies cheap for a few hours. But the boys were used to walking, they declared,

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and wouldn't mind the tramp at all. Besides, there was much more to see afoot.

The village had been reached and their inquiries for supplies well rewarded, when the trouble suddenly overtook them. Like a bolt from a clear sky it fell. There was a group of mirioks and of totem poles near the centre of the village. They were grotesquely carved and painted, and made hideous by the numerous streamers of old clothes, twisted wisps of straw, and the remains of old shoes that dangled from them. Thoughtlessly the boys began to laugh and to make remarks concerning them. Chefoo spoke warning words, but they would not heed him. Slowly a crowd began to gather, unnoticed by the boys, but painfully apparent to Chefoo. There were scowling faces and now and then a threatening sentence. The mirioks and totem poles were the guardians of the village, set there to avoid the evils the demons would otherwise do. What business had these impertinent young strangers to find subject for humor in them?

Suddenly something that was streaming out to the breeze from near the top of one of the mirioks seemed to attract their attention

irresistibly. There was a quick exclamation from Arthur, an answering one from Wilbur, then, ere Chefoo could so much as divine their intention, much less prevent it, both boys started off at full speed toward the mirioks. The crowd, now thoroughly aroused, set out to follow them. So, too, did Chefoo.

The poleman did not know how it had happened. There was a scramble, a sudden scuffle as though they playfully contended with each other. Then Arthur lost his balance. He careened toward one of the mirioks, and over it went, with Arthur on top of it and Wilbur clutching wildly at Arthur. The miriok, which was of wood, was no doubt well rotted from a long standing in the moist earth, Chefoo admitted, and required but little force to send it toppling over. But the crowd did not take this into consideration. As they looked at it, the boys had maliciously committed mischief. They had dared to desecrate the sacred charms, had not only wilfully made fun of them, but had also laid one of them low.

Instantly the two boys were seized, and despite their own explanations and remon-

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strances, and Chefoo's entreaties and promises, they were carried off in the direction of the magistrate's. Chefoo had attempted again and again to follow, but each time had been driven back. His next effort was to make a detour of the village and to try to gain some point of vantage from which he might take note of what happened to them. But the only points of information he had been able to obtain were to the effect that the magistrate of the district, who resided at the town in question, was on a journey to Seoul and would not return under ten or twelve days. His son, who had been left in charge of affairs, declared he would have nothing to do with the matter, as it was quite too serious for him. He had therefore ordered the boys imprisoned until his father's return, but as to the location of their prison Chefoo could learn nothing definite. It was not on the magistrate's premises, as the son had declared he would not have them there.

"Poor lads! I fear they will pay dearly for their momentary folly, if they have not already done so," said Mr. Vance.

"The question now is how best to proceed

without making matters worse," replied Dr. Griffin. "If the magistrate were only here, we might buy or intimidate him. But in his absence we are handicapped, especially if the son is inclined to be puffed up with his own importance."

"The first move assuredly is to get nearer the village," said Mr. Vance again, "and the next to find out just where our poor lads are being held as prisoners. So soon as Myo comes, which ought to be shortly, we will push off."

But Myo did not come as expected. In truth, Kang, after considerable delay, returned without him. He had succeeded at last in coming up with Myo, who, it seemed, had been making a succession of visits to old friends. Myo had informed Kang that it would simply be out of the question for him to return that evening to the sampan. There was some business to which he must attend. It was no matter if the sampan was held another day at the village. Those aboard it had plenty of time to spare.

Kang's sympathies were sincere and deep when he returned to learn of the true state of

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affairs. He agreed readily with Mr. Vance that the first important move was to take the sampan up the river, at least to the outskirts of the village where the boys had been seized and confined. But there was not daylight enough to do it now. They must wait until morning, for there was a very bad rapid in the way. If Myo did not return in the morning, as there was some hope he would do, he, Kang, would get the assistance of one of the village polemen, who knew the currents, and the sampan could no doubt be taken safely to the proposed destination.

The joyous spirit that had so recently pervaded the hearts of those aboard the sampan, especially the young members of the party, had now given place to one of deep apprehension.

"I cannot see what possessed the lads," Mr. Vance said. "Arthur, at least, ought to have known better. I am truly shocked by his behavior."

"Father," said Margaret earnestly, "I can't believe that Arthur or Wilbur really behaved in the manner described by Chefoo, though at the same time, I must say, I am not ques-

tioning Chefoo's honesty in the matter. It really appeared to him as he described it, I am sure. Only Arthur or Wilbur can explain it; that they can explain it, I am certain."

"Your opinion is very much my own, Margaret," her father replied. "I have had the very same thoughts concerning the conduct of the lads. They may perhaps have laughed at the grotesque appearance of the mirioks; you know how easy it is for Arthur to see an amusing side. If Wilbur went further it was through ignorance. But that either lad could contemplate or carry out the design of doing harm to the mirioks, I cannot for one moment believe."

This was the opinion shared by all. The boys had fallen into trouble, it was evident, but it was not through any malicious act on their part.

"They will no doubt put them in some loathsome place," said Margaret, the tears in her eyes, "where they cannot get a breath of pure, sweet air; and they will feed them on all manner of horrible food. O poor Arthur! poor Wilbur! Would that you and I were

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boys, Sarah," her eyes suddenly flashing, "so that we might go and search for them and fight for them until they were released."

Stephen heard these remarks, and they stung him no little. He was a boy and he had both a brave and a willing heart, yet what was he able to do under the exasperating circumstances? Had not even his father and Dr. Griffin failed in the quest on which they had gone? What, then, could Meg or Sarah do if they were boys?

"You think, Meg, that you would be able to accomplish something if you were really a boy and could go out to look for Wilbur and Arthur," he said. "But father and Dr. Griffin both say that it isn't strength but cunning that is going to win in this trouble. The Koreans are wily and full of tricks. If we are to succeed in liberating Wilbur and Arthur as speedily as we hope, we must meet cunning with cunning."

"Why, Stephen!" cried Margaret suddenly, as she turned toward him, her lips suspiciously near a smile, "you dear old sensitive plant you! Why, no one had a thought of you in what was said. There was never a

question of your courage and loyalty, never ! never ! We are too well aware of that. Sarah and I were only bemoaning our helplessness, that was all."

Apart from the lighter vein in which she had replied to Stephen's speech, there was that in it that had given Margaret food for thought. Was the only way left open to them to meet cunning with cunning? Yet how was it to be done?

Myo had not appeared in the morning, but Kang, making his promise good, had obtained one of the village polemen and safely conducted the sampan to the point desired.

Mr. Vance, however, had not waited for the morning ere making search for Wilbur and Arthur. Taking Chefoo and Kodong he had started for the village shortly after the return of Kang. He searched long and patiently, but was baffled at every point. Those of whom he enquired either could not or would not give him the information desired. The boys had been taken for better security to the house of one of the prominent men of the village. Just who this man was, and where he resided, no one appeared to know.

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The next day Dr. Griffin and Kang set forth on the quest. They, too, searched earnestly and with painstaking care but without avail. The boys were imprisoned somewhere within the village, but where, they were unable to learn. The chief reason for the failure lay in the fact that they were not permitted to enter any of the dwellings, save two or three of the humbler class. They were met without, and persistently held there through all the time of questioning. This had been the experience of Mr. Vance and also that of Dr. Griffin. Neither were Chefoo, Kodong or Kang more successful. They had been spotted as the servants of the foreigners and as such were regarded with suspicion and kept at a distance. The only satisfaction that could be obtained was to the effect that when the magistrate returned the boys would be produced and the trial take place.

Mr. Vance thought of appealing to the authorities at Chong-chon, the largest town on the river above them, but hesitated to do this, fearing a complication that would make matters worse instead of better. Another thought that presented itself was a telegraph

message to the American Consul in Seoul, urging him to present the matter at once to the king. There was a station at Chong-chon, though he had heard that messages were sent in only once a week. By the time the king's ear had been gained and the message from him had arrived, what might not have happened? Yet Mr. Vance resolved that if by the evening of the morrow no clearer light had been shed upon the perplexing matter either he or Dr. Griffin, on pony back and with a guide, would start up the river to Chong-chon.

Another plan that had been tried was communication with the magistrate's son. After much manœuvring and an endless amount of trouble, Mr. Vance at last obtained an audience with him. He found him a dissipated young idler, too indolent to really care which way the matter went. He had promised certain of the villagers that the lads should be punished, and he meant to keep his promise. He had stability enough for that, it seemed, though none to be turned toward a good purpose. When Mr. Vance entreated that he be permitted to communi-

cate with the boys, the young glutton, whose face was puffed from the effects of high living, arched his brows as well as he could, declaring that he really did not know where the boys were confined. It had been too much bother to charge himself with the knowledge. There was nothing to do save to await the return of his father. He really hadn't time for such things.

"The young villain!" said Margaret when she heard of the result of this interview. "Wouldn't I like to get my hands on him, though, and shake him."

CHAPTER XI

THE MOURNING STRANGER

THE fourth morning after the disappearance of the boys, and still Myo did not return! Messengers sent to communicate with him failed to locate him. He had disappeared as completely as had Wilbur and Arthur.

"Could he, too, have met with foul play?" asked Mr. Vance.

But Dr. Griffin did not think so. Myo had some private matters of his own, he was assured, which had not as yet been adjusted to his satisfaction. Besides, Myo, no doubt, was tired of the work of poling, and this business gave him the excuse he wanted to obtain a period of rest.

"He might at least communicate with us and let us know his intentions," complained Mr. Vance.

Truth to tell, he was beginning to have some very queer feelings about Myo. Margaret had her own opinion concerning Myo,

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which, for a very good reason, she kept to herself.

On the morning of this fourth day which was Monday, Margaret's nerves had reached their highest tension. She felt that she could not possibly let another hour pass without some effort on her part to effect Wilbur's and Arthur's release. If she could only find out where they were, it would afford some relief to the terrible strain. She entreated her father that she and Sarah, accompanied by Kang, be permitted to make one more trial in the effort to locate the boys' prison. Surely if they managed carefully, they might be able to learn something through the women and children.

The same baffling circumstances, however, confronted them as before. They were met coldly and treated rudely. In some instances, they were driven off the premises. Heart-sick, Margaret returned to the sampan; but she had not yet given up. "Margaret had a persistency that would level stone walls," Arthur had declared, and truly was Margaret proving it. Plan after plan passed through her mind, then suddenly Margaret saw light.

"The only way is to meet cunning with cunning," Stephen had quoted her father and Dr. Griffin as saying; but as yet no one had formed an idea as to how that plan was to be carried out; then suddenly Margaret felt that she saw the way.

In Korea, often called the "Nation of big hats," there is one that exceeds them all in dimensions, especially in the extent of its brim. This is the "mourning hat," often as large as the average umbrella. The face of a mourner, covering his head with one of these, is completely shut off from view. In addition he arrays himself in a gown of light gray with voluminous sleeves, into which his hands after his arms have been crossed, are thrust. Thus no portion of his person is exposed to view. Should such happen at any time, he is considered to be lacking in that extreme modesty and humility with which all mourners should be endowed.

Everywhere throughout Korea this mourning costume is treated with the highest respect. No one would think of molesting a mourner thus arrayed. He must not even be accosted; and during this period of mourn-

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ing, which extends throughout three years for a parent, he cannot be approached upon any subject, not even for the purpose of collecting a bill.

Among Mr. Vance's effects, as Margaret knew, was one of these mourning hats and gowns, even the straw sandals. He had brought it along with the half serious, half laughing remark that no one of them knew just what emergency might arise to give them a need to use it.

"The only drawback in it," he added with a merry twinkle, "is that neither Dr. Griffin nor myself could be successfully disguised by it. In the first place, it is quite too short, and in the second, our beards are altogether too much in evidence. A genuine mourner is supposed to have a smooth face."

It was of this mourning costume that Margaret now thought in her desperation. Her plan was to don it, to mingle with the villagers, to listen to their conversation, and in this way, if possible, gain an idea as to the whereabouts of Wilbur and Arthur. Once she had located them, she would dare almost anything to communicate with them.

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The young girl was tall and slender, just about the height of the average Korean man. She was almost sure the costume would fit her. Indeed, she had once tried it on in response to a laughing dare from Arthur. The only portions of it that gave her concern were the hat and sandals. They would assuredly prove too large.

"I can stuff them with paper," she said as the question of their fit presented itself.

She had to do some skilful manœuvring to extract them from among her father's effects without his knowledge; but finally, with Sarah's aid, she accomplished it. With Sarah's aid, too, she made further preparations for the undertaking.

As great as was her courage and assurance, Margaret had not dared to risk the daylight on the proceedings she had planned. In the first place it would have been next to impossible to get away from the sampan unobserved, even with Sarah's help; and in the second she could not trust to the dye on her hands to pass muster in the daylight.

The moon rose early, Margaret knew, and it was almost a full moon. She would slip away

from the sampan just as its first rays appeared, ere the light had become clear enough to betray her as she slipped over the side of the sampan.

"O my dear, how will you ever get to the bank from this side?" asked Sarah, who was in the secret.

"I shall have to wade as the natives do," declared Margaret laughing, "but I'll take care to hold up my skirts, and I'll not put on stockings and sandals till I am safe ashore."

With many kisses and sighs from Sarah, and a few piteously sobbed out sentences at the last, Margaret arrayed herself for the undertaking she had planned with so stout a heart. There was only one weapon she allowed herself, and this was not designed for her own use. In a stout belt belonging to Arthur, which she buckled around her waist under the folds of the mourning gown, she placed the big knife with which Min carved his fowls. Hugging her guitar tightly, and concealing it by the folds of her robe, Margaret stood ready. She knew just how to reach the shore through the shallowest water. She had given attention to that at the very beginning of her plan.

At one time Margaret feared she would be discovered ere she left the sampan. Attracted by some noise, doubtless the splash she made as she went into the water, her father appeared suddenly in the door of his little cabin. She could see him plainly, and he was looking straight at her. Would he suspect anything was wrong? Would he call to her? Worse still, would he send one of the boatmen to investigate?

As she moved away, her heart thumping so she could count every beat, she heard her father remark as he turned to Dr. Griffin,

"One of those fellows in his mourning costume is out there, and when I first saw him I think he was coming toward the boat and for no good purpose. He is going away now, however, and I hope he will stay away. It is surprising what rascals some of these people can be, whether in mourning costume or otherwise. Now wouldn't you think this fellow would be too busy with his grief to come prowling around here thinking of what he might lay his hands on to carry away?"

Despite her loudly thumping heart Marga-

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ret almost laughed out as she heard these words.

"Dear old daddy!" she ejaculated to herself, "he little dreams how near to the facts he is speaking!"

The path from the river to the village lay deep in shadow, for the moon had not yet come sufficiently above the tree-tops to flood it with light. The trees were quite dense at this point. There were ash, birch and walnut, and further on groups of umbrella pine, with now and then a wide-spreading persimmon.

Except for a few houses scattered about, the village lay along the principal street, which ran almost parallel with the river. The most of the houses were of mud thatched with straw. Around each was a high fence made of bamboo. Now and then a more pretentious dwelling was seen with tiled roof, and in the midst of a larger enclosure.

On walked Margaret slowly, deliberately, as became the costume she wore. She was quite calm now, and her heart had ceased its rapid beating. As she desired to gain knowledge of the lay of the path before her, she

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would lift her head for a moment, then drop it again until her face became concealed beneath the immense brim of the hat.

As Margaret neared the first group of huts two great dogs, gaunt and hungry looking, rushed from an opening in the enclosure and began to assail her with furious barking.

"Korean dogs are much given to barking, but to little biting," she had heard her father and Dr. Griffin say, and the proof of the assertion had been given them many times on this trip. Armed with this knowledge Margaret stood her ground boldly. She threw up her arms and then twanged her guitar at them. In a twinkling they dropped their war-like front, turned tail, and sneaked back to the enclosure.

With a courageous step Margaret approached and entered by the same opening through which she had seen the dogs disappear. The noise of the dogs' barking had drawn all the inmates of the hut into the yard. They regarded Margaret curiously as she approached. She raised her head long enough to discover that, with the exception of one very old man, the group consisted of

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women and children. She made them the greeting she had so often seen others do, then dropped to the ground as though from exhaustion, her feet crossed under her in excellent native fashion.

At once their sympathies were aroused, and Margaret felt "as mean as a dog," as she afterward expressed it to Sarah, when food and drink were pressed upon her. She made a great show of paying her respects to both, eating with all the noise she could command, which is the custom in Korea when one desires to show his appreciation of food. The louder the lips are smacked, then the higher the enjoyment, and the greater, too, the compliment to your host. All this time, however, when she appeared to be eating with such relish, Margaret was conveying the larger portion of the viands to a place of concealment in the thick grass about her. It might be discovered in the morning, but what mattered it then?

"What little I did eat almost choked me!" she afterward declared, "and the gags I made in the effort to get it down were the only real parts of the noises made."

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While eating Margaret took care to display her hands as little as possible. The guitar, too, she kept hugged up against her under the folds of her robe. The time had not yet arrived to make use of it.

Once in the midst of the repast a little child ran forward and curiously peeped up under the hat. Involuntarily Margaret threw her head up and smiled. For just one instant the moonlight flashed upon her face. The glimpse was enough to delight the child. Where was there a rarer smile than Margaret's? The little one clapped her hands and drew nearer still.

Margaret's heart gave a rapid beat as she realized her imprudence. Had others had a glimpse of her face? Fortunately, they had been too occupied to notice. A woman now called the child away.

As Margaret was finishing her repast, the most of the food having gone into the grass, two men entered the enclosure and stood looking at her. As much as she dared she raised her head to get a view of them. They seemed to be well satisfied with the treatment their women had given her, and nodded ap-

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proval. They bowed to her respectfully, then went and squatted in the midst of the group about the doorway.

Margaret was sure now she would hear something that would give her a clue. The men had no doubt been away in the village and would have bits of news at their tongues' end. But the sequel proved that she was mistaken. She caught no word to indicate that Wilbur, Arthur, or other member of the sampan party was the subject of conversation. Feeling convinced after a time that she would learn nothing here, she got up to go. The men also arose. They were on the point of escorting her to her next stopping place, as was the custom, though she did not know it. At that moment, however, three men came in hurriedly and in evident excitement. They quickly made known their errand. They had come to summon the men of the family to a conference at Mr. Kat-see's, where the matter of the hated foreigners was to be discussed.

Margaret's heart gave a great bound. At last she had the clue for which she had longed, and for which she had risked so much !

CHAPTER XII

THE CONFERENCE AT KAT-SEE'S

THE men made haste to depart. Each bowed to Margaret with much deference as he passed out.

So soon as she dared, Margaret got up to follow. Her movements, however, were very deliberate, despite that her heart was fairly bounding with the desire to be away, close upon the heels of the men who were going to Kat-see's house. There she would surely learn something of the whereabouts of Wilbur and Arthur. But dared she follow? Dared she mingle with the crowd of men gathered at Kat-see's?

Margaret's manner was composed, though her heart was now pounding away under the folds of the gray mourning gown in such a manner that it seemed to her others must hear it besides herself.

Her desire was to keep the men in sight so that she could find the way to Kat-see's without loss of time. Yet she must not seem

anxious to follow them. Mourners in Korea are expected to take no lively interest in anything, but to preserve that mournful and dejected air in keeping with one whom the demons have seen fit to afflict.

The men walked rapidly. But even if Margaret had lost sight of these, she could still have found the way to Kat-see's, for other men were seen coming from their huts, and all turning in the same direction. Truly the gathering at Kat-see's would be no small affair; and more and more evident it became that Margaret would have need of all her courage.

Kat-see's was reached at last. The premises were almost at the upper end of the village and were of such appearance as at once showed that Kat-see was a person of no small importance. Indeed, he had once been magistrate of the district. The house consisted of several rooms, and there was a tiled roof, and actually two tiny panes of glass set in above two of the window openings.

The men's apartments, which in all Korean houses are at the front, were not far away from the gates, set, with some pretensions to

ornamentation, in the bamboo fence. They stood wide open, and everything about the premises had a hospitable appearance. Men were seen within the apartments, while others were squatting outside within the circle of light from the openings, and vigorously puffing away on their long-stemmed pipes.

Two or three men jostled Margaret as all tried to enter the gateway at the same time. She trembled, but with one accord they stepped back, each bowing profoundly.

"Now," Margaret said to herself, "if ever you needed grit, it's now."

Stepping within the shadow of some shrubbery, she threw her head up for a moment to get the lay of the path before her and the situation of the groups of men squatting in front of the apartment. Then with slow and resolute step she passed, stopping at last near to a group she had singled out. She sank with apparent ease to her knees, crossing her feet under her, and had reason to bless herself that she had insisted on Mok-po's giving her again and again training in this art.

Almost the first words Margaret caught made her heart bound. Six years in Seoul

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and a close mingling throughout that time with native servants and with the women and girls of her father's mission had given Margaret a fair understanding of the language.

They were talking about the young foreigners, and, as they talked, several grew much excited.

"We have treated them too kindly. They should have had severer punishment," declared one.

"So I have said," was the answer. "They have made it child's play so far, merely keeping them in confinement."

"You would have them punished in addition to the confinement?"

"Yes; I would."

"But the magistrate is not here, and no one has the authority but his son, and he will not act."

"He would not before, but he will now, for he has sent word to Kat-see that he will agree to anything that is decided on to-night."

"He does not want the trouble of deciding for himself?"

"Yes; that is it exactly."

There was something of a stir now, and the

men began getting up and moving toward the house. At first Margaret thought she dared not follow, but after a moment's thought she decided that it appeared the most natural thing to do. So she arose and went after them, though at a becoming distance.

Kat-see had called the conference to order and was now addressing them. Margaret pressed as near to the apartment as she could get. She had not as yet quite screwed up her courage to the point of entering. As she stood, she almost touched elbows with a man on her left.

All sorts of fears began to assail Margaret. Suppose that a strand of her hair should take a notion to straggle down from under the hat? She thought she had put it up carefully, but somehow it began to feel very loose. She dared not put up her hands for an investigation, lest she make some movement decidedly feminine. What further doubts and fears might have assailed her were completely driven from her mind by words she heard Kat-see speak.

"The punishment to be meted out to these young foreign devils has been decided upon

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by Chun-san and myself, to be carried out until the return of his father, the magistrate, which may not be until many days yet."

The men pressed nearer, eager to hear. Margaret scarcely dared to breathe, so afraid was she that she might lose a word.

"The boys shall be kept in their present safe place of confinement, which so far seems to have completely baffled those other foreign devils. But every morning," continued Kat-see, and now he smiled grimly, "they shall be taken to the top of the hill known as Nippoo-san and made to toil in the digging of the tunnel till the going down of the sun. And what these slaves find in the way of golden nuggets shall be given to the men of the village who care not themselves to bother with the labor of seeking for the treasure in the heart of Nippoo-san."

A storm of assents greeted this proposal. There was much wagging of heads and repeated grunts of approval. It was evident that Kat-see had made quite a hit. The young foreign devils were to dig the treasure out of Nippoo-san, and all for them.

Margaret almost betrayed herself in her ex-

citement. Wilbur and Arthur, neither one of whom, she was quite sure, had ever handled pick or shovel for more than an hour or so at a time, who in short knew nothing of hard physical labor, were to be put to the severe task of digging for gold in the rocky heart of Nippoo-san. She remembered now how Myo had told them that a tunnel had been started from the brow of the hill by some people of a near by village, but abandoned when it was discovered what hard work it was. Now Wilbur and Arthur were to be set to this task and made to keep at it from early morning till set of sun.

Suddenly Kat-see paused, and, addressing some words to two men standing near, which Margaret did not hear, waved his hand in the direction of an inner apartment.

Margaret did not note this movement either, as she dared not raise her head sufficiently to look at Kat-see. She was merely standing and listening to him. Attracted now by a strange commotion within the room and by the sound of a voice, then of voices that made her heart give a sudden bound as though it would jump out of her throat, Margaret stepped back

within the shadow and raised her head cautiously.

There in the centre of the room stood Wilbur and Arthur. She could see them plainly, as nearly all the Koreans were squatting upon the floor. How pale and dejected the poor fellows looked, and how Margaret's heart ached for them. Truly had they paid dear for any boyish folly of which they had been guilty. That they had wilfully committed a wrong, Margaret still would not believe.

The boys were questioned as to their behavior of four days before, and Margaret's heart gave a bound of joy when she heard each disclaim with manly air any intention to do harm to the mirioks. The breaking of the post had been merely an accident.

Evidently the men squatting about did not believe them. Scowls were on the faces that every now and then peered around at the two youths.

Kat-see proceeded to acquaint the two boys with the decision of the conference. For one brief instant each bowed his head as though overcome, but the next it was raised proudly, and no young soldier could have borne him-

self with a braver air than was in the carriage and poise of the head of each lad as he left the room. Yet as Arthur passed in front of the opening near which Margaret stood, he looked out for one brief moment, and she alone saw the sudden despair in his eyes, the quivering of his lips.

Margaret had accomplished her purpose. She had found where the boys were confined. They were in the house of Kat-see, doubtless brought here for the purpose of going through the farce of appearing before the conference in their own behalf. But now she was so near them she couldn't bear to go back without trying to speak to the boys, and let them know that help would be brought to them.

Margaret had noted carefully the direction taken by those who had the boys under guard. She had seen them pass through an opening into an adjoining apartment, and now had a clear idea as to its situation. Her knowledge of the appointments of Korean homes was such that she knew the men's apartments were always at the front, while women and girls occupied the rear of the premises. Therefore she was almost sure that Wilbur

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and Arthur had been carried no further than the apartment which lay immediately behind the right hand one of the two apartments in which the men were now gathered.

Slowly Margaret moved away from the front of the house. Nearly all the men had gone within on the appearance of Wilbur and Arthur, being eager to hear what they had to say. Only two or three were squatting about on the grass, and these paid little heed to Margaret as she stole cautiously away toward the side of the house.

Margaret's great fear now was of dogs. If they discovered her, they might bark and thus betray her movements ere her design was more than begun. But she need not have been afraid, for Kat-see, out of consideration for the feelings of his guests, had had his dogs safely shut up for this evening.

Margaret picked her way cautiously. Though the moon was still shining brightly at the times it came out from behind the clouds, the shrubbery was thick and in the shadows cast beneath the objects were not very distinctly seen. Once Margaret almost ran upon a servant busy with some task, but

fortunately drew back ere she was discovered.

Margaret was sure now she was near the outside wall of the room. She could hear considerable noise within as of several Koreans busily eating. The next moment she caught plainly a command that caused her heart to beat more quickly. It was addressed to the boys, informing them that if they did not condescend to eat what was tossed to them, they would get nothing.

Even more distinctly than the command she caught Arthur's words as he replied that they did not propose to be fed like dogs : they would starve first.

Margaret almost betrayed herself by an exclamation. How near Arthur's voice sounded ! how close, too, it was to the ground. Why, he must be lying on the floor of the room right up against the wall.

CHAPTER XIII

MUSIC'S ENTRANCING POWER

SUDDENLY Margaret's eye caught a glimmer of light upon a branch of the syringa bush near which she stood. It was like a tiny star twinkling there. Of course, it came from the room, which, to all appearances, had every window shut hard and fast.

Margaret pressed nearer, running her fingers carefully along the wall. To her joy she discovered that a bit of the plastering had fallen away, and that she could see straight into the room through the splints of bamboo. There were Arthur and Wilbur, both plainly to be seen, and Arthur, sure enough, was stretched out upon a mat lying close against the wall. Near by on another mat was Wilbur, but he was sitting up, his head bowed dejectedly upon his hands.

Over in one corner, not far from the door by which they had entered from the front apartments, three men were squatting about as many little tables, and evidently enjoying

to its fullest extent a repast, which for some reason had been served late. They were smacking their lips at a great rate and talking loudly to each other. Margaret was thankful for this noise. She slowly moved along the wall till she was sure she was at that portion of it against which Arthur lay.

"Arthur," she called cautiously, "Arthur! It is Margaret. If you hear me, don't make any exclamation."

She was too late, however, with this caution. Arthur exclaimed sharply, though fortunately not very loudly. The next instant he spoke in a voice somewhat smothered in his effort to obey her injunction to be cautious.

"Margaret! How did you ever get here?"

He had now rolled over so that his face was toward the wall. Fortunately, the men, busy with their meal, paid no heed to him. The boys were safe here for the time being, the guards were sure. At midnight they would be escorted back to their more secure prison.

"Arthur," spoke Margaret again, and using the same cautious tones, "if Wilbur hears us, try to tell him as quickly as you can, so that

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he will not arouse the suspicion of the guards by his actions."

"I think there is no prospect that he will hear us, Margaret, especially so long as we use our present low tones and the guards are making such a noise."

"Bless the guards!" ejaculated Margaret, "for giving me this chance. Do you think they will be much longer at the meal, Arthur?"

"At least twenty minutes or more. They have only begun."

"Get as near to the wall as you can, Arthur, and press your ear against it."

"All right, but are you alone?" asked Arthur anxiously. "I have heard no other voice as yet."

Margaret answered evasively. It would never do to let Arthur know that she was here alone in the midst of these dangers and at this hour of the night. He might do something rash to get to her. So, she hastened to add,

"Now, Arthur, don't worry about me. I have sufficient protection. I am in capital disguise. Do you remember the mourning

costume father brought along? Well, I am in that, and I have been among scores of Koreans to-night and not one has detected me."

Arthur came dangerously near to whistling out in his amazement. He checked himself barely in time.

"Well, Meg, if you aren't a trump!" he whispered.

"Now listen closely to me, Arthur," continued Margaret in somewhat rapid tones. Truth to tell, Margaret was growing not a little nervous. But a great plan was coming to her—a plan that might save the boys. "I have Min's big carving knife," she said. "I am going to work it beneath the wall right at the point where the latter joins the floor. As soon as you see the blade, help me all you can to get it through without letting them see you.

"When you have it," went on Margaret, "be sure you hide it well until the time comes to use it.

"Have you the knife?" was asked anxiously some moments later.

"Yes, and safely hidden," came the quick reply.

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"Well, now listen. When you see the guards hastily leave the room——"

"As if they would do that."

"But they will do it very soon, I hope. When you hear, you will understand. Now when you see the guards go out of the room," repeated Margaret, "you must make haste to tell Wilbur of the chance to escape. So soon as you are convinced that no one is looking, go to the window and cut the fastenings. Then jump out and make your way through the shrubbery to the back of the garden, and run as fast as you can to the sampan. But don't, under any circumstances, attempt to escape by way of the front; you understand me, don't you?"

"Yes. But, Meg, what are you going to do? What is to become of you in the meantime?"

"I shall be safe enough," came the brave response, "and if you do not mind, I shall beat you to the sampan. Now, Arthur, please, please do just as I have said, and don't stop for me or anything."

Margaret had barely arisen when she was startled to see a woman approaching through

the shrubbery from the rear of the premises. Margaret tried to conceal herself within the shadow of the wall, but it was too late. The woman had seen her and gave a stifled scream. She evidently had not expected to find a man prowling about this portion of the premises. The first cry would no doubt have been followed by a louder and more prolonged one, but for the instant action of Margaret.

She drew the guitar from its hiding-place, and swept her fingers across the strings in a chord of melody, stepping at the same time fully into the moonlight, where her gray gown and mourning hat could at once be distinguished.

The woman gazed astonished. She no longer had the desire to summon those who would eject the intruder. The sweet notes of the music had caught her ear and now her heart. She was listening as one entranced. Besides, she had noted the mourning garb, and respect for it helped to prevent further outcry.

Slowly Margaret moved away, playing as she went, soft, low notes of melody which took on louder and fuller tone as she neared

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again the front of the premises. The woman followed her as far as she dared, pausing at last under a clump of shrubbery almost within the light that fell from a window of the men's apartment.

Louder grew Margaret's music ; more vigorous the spirit she threw into it, until it became a tinkling flow of melody that reached with full volume the ears of the men in Kat-see's apartments. There were many quick exclamations, and a hurried rising of numerous squatting forms. With one accord they hastened to the doorway, then out into the yard.

Protected by an overhanging bush, Margaret threw her head up long enough to note the effect of the music and to see them coming. She had placed herself where she could look into the apartment whenever she chose to run the risk of raising her face. This first view, however, did not show her what she most desired to see, but the second glance did. The notes of the music had reached the room where Wilbur and Arthur were confined. The guards had risen hastily to come and see what it could mean. Margaret saw them plainly

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as they came through the inner doorway. She knew them by their bare heads and by the trimmings of red on their blouses. She dropped her head again, feeling as though she could cry aloud in her thankfulness.

But she was not yet assured. Might they not quickly remember their trust and return to the room? More and more alluring grew the music under Margaret's skilled fingers. It was as though she were putting all her power of persuasion into it in order to draw those grim guardians further and further away from their charge. When she dared look again they were in the outer doorway; and then for the first time Margaret felt that she had conquered.

The Korean's love for music is well-nigh universal. Scarce can one be found whose soul is not responsive to it. Margaret's knowledge of this had enabled her to arm herself with the strongest weapon of conquest she could have chosen, the sweet-voiced guitar.

They swayed to and fro around her, their bodies keeping time to the rhythm. There was a chill of terror at her heart every time

she thought of the possibility of her hat's being knocked off.

The greater part of the throng, however, kept at a respectful distance. They still remembered the consideration due her mourning costume. It was only the few carried away by enthusiasm for the music who pressed up nearer to her. They had, too, consuming curiosity to take a closer look upon the instrument whence issued these entrancing sounds. Yet these few made Margaret nervous, and kept her on the strain of watching them closely. At any moment one overcome by curiosity might bend down and peer up under her hat; then—but Margaret would not permit herself to think of that.

Air after air the young musician played with all the fervor and skill she could command, pausing only long enough between each one to give arm and shoulder a short rest from their strain. During the pauses she could hear comments of a varied nature passed from one squatting figure to another.

"He plays as though the spirits dwelt with him."

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"'Tis no doubt the spirit of an ancestor who was a great musician."

"I have not heard one in Seoul play as this one does, nor seen so wonderful an instrument."

"Truly the demons are not so angry with him, or they would drive away the sweet-voiced spirits."

"This is no doubt why the music has no doleful air. He had done nothing to deserve the punishment the gods of mourning have inflicted."

In her anxiety to catch and hold their attention, Margaret had not remembered that as a mourner, her music ought not to be lively and gay. Now as she caught these expressions she realized that but for the spell of her music she might have made a fatal mistake.

Minute by minute sped on. It was surely ten now, fifteen, twenty. Wilbur and Arthur had had ample time to escape, even to get beyond pursuit. During the intervals, when she had stopped to gain the moments of rest necessary, she had strained her ears to catch any sounds of commotion. So far, there had

been none. The guards were still squatting about the doorway, leaning partly out of it in their intense desire to lose no strain of the music. If any one of those in authority noticed them, there was no sign of ordering them back to duty. The indications were that the thrall of the music had completely banished for the time being all thought of the boys. The women and girls, too, had abandoned their quarters and were now hanging about the doors and windows of the front apartments, all under the wonderful spell of the music.

Suddenly Margaret's music changed to low, mournful notes. She bowed her head still lower over the instrument. Her body swayed as one in the throes of painful recollection. But this was not all acting on Margaret's part. She was exhausted in body and anxious in mind. The strain was telling upon her nerves.

With the same mournful air she returned the guitar to its case. Those about her began to move further back. The others who were squatting around in a little circle got up. The grief of the mourner had now returned in

full force to the player, they realized. He must again be on his sad way, wandering aimlessly to and fro, devoid of pursuit, denied intercourse with his fellow men, and all because the gods were yet angry with him.

Respectfully they stood aside to let her pass, all but one, and this one, to Margaret's uneasiness, showed no disposition to leave her. Indeed, as she walked slowly onward toward the opening in the bamboo palings, he followed her. Margaret could see his gown moving along beside her own and but a few inches apart. As she passed into the open pathway beyond the gate, he turned suddenly and clutched her sleeve. Margaret's heart gave a bound like a frightened deer's when the hounds are about to leap upon it. What was about to happen? After all that brave struggle, when victory seemed almost assured, was it really discovery that awaited?

Instinctively she drew away from the man's touch. He noted the movement, and then, to her inexpressible joy, he spoke an humble apology, and as though he addressed one of his own race.

With faster step Margaret moved on, for the

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moment forgetting the part she was playing. Her one desire now was to reach the sampan. Perhaps she had already delayed too long. At any moment the hue and cry over the escape of the boys might be raised. If they failed to get off with the sampan ere an angry crowd reached the banks, then this last state of affairs would no doubt be worse than the first.

Faster and faster grew Margaret's steps, yet the man kept beside her. She had purposely refrained from walking along the pathway, not caring to encounter the groups of men returning from Kat-see's.

Suddenly the man began to mutter, and Margaret's chilly sensation considerably increased. She caught a sentence now and then. He was asking pardon of and invoking the aid of some one of the many gods and demons worshiped by his people. Was his mind affected? Had the music turned his head? Verily this last seemed to be the case, for he now seized her sleeve again and pointed to the guitar which she was carrying in its green baize bag. He appeared determined to address her to the full extent desired, despite her mourning garb, to relieve his mind of

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what was burdening it. In a little while his real desire was apparent to Margaret. There was one for whom he wanted her to play, one upon whom the demons had been very hard of late, tormenting him in many ways. If she would only come and play for him, it would surely drive away the spell of evil. This one was his father.

There seemed nothing else but for Margaret to comply, since the man had her sleeve in a tight clutch and was already urging her in the direction he wished her to take. Margaret tried to release herself, but in vain. Fearing that if she struggled more forcefully with him her hat would slip off, Margaret yielded with what grace she could to the inevitable. She was now in an agony of suspense, listening for those telltale sounds. Her wonder was great that she had not already caught them. Had the boys failed after all to make their escape?

The man drew her persistently on, till, when a little more than midway of the town, he pulled her suddenly to one side, and she could see that they were entering another gateway very similar to that at Kat-see's.

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The dwelling, too, which they now approached was almost as pretentious as that of the ex-magistrate. Two men were within the front apartment. They were talking earnestly, and from their tones there seemed to be a great weight upon the mind of each. One, at the very moment Margaret reached the doorway was bemoaning some dread happening that seemed imminent. Something in the tones of this voice caused Margaret's heart to go a little faster; so, too, did a peculiar mark on the sandals near by which he had removed from his feet. It really needed not that side-wise, cautious glance to convince Margaret. The man was Myo-Sang.

CHAPTER XIV

MARGARET'S STARTLING DISCOVERY

SHOULD she run or stand her ground? This was the supreme question of the moment in Margaret's mind. Ere she could answer it to her satisfaction, the privilege of decision was taken away from her. The young man grasped her sleeve still more firmly, while at the same time he made vehement gesture toward the guitar.

"Play! play!" he begged. "Drive the evil spirits away!"

Furthermore, at that moment she felt herself propelled forward until, despite her efforts, she was within the room.

As Margaret threw her head up to recover her balance she had a view of the other man's face. Where had she seen it? It looked decidedly familiar. Fortunately, he did not gain a view of her own face. He was too intently staring at his son, whose behavior in thus familiarly, even roughly treating one in mourning garb had completely astounded

him. He began to protest, then to use censure, but the young man paid no heed. He was still repeating his vehement plea, "Play! Play!"

Suddenly Myo turned and addressed the older man. A few sentences were spoken, urging that he await the development of the son's request of the mourner to play upon his instrument. Ere the sentences were finished Myo had used a name that made Margaret's heart leap. The name was Pop-hung. Now she knew why the face had been familiar. Myo's companion was none other than the owner of the junk from which they had purchased the charcoal that day on the river—the man who had acted so queerly at sight of their head poleman. Myo's actions, too, Margaret recalled, had partaken of the mysterious. Now here they were together, and very plainly they had some concern in common.

For the second time that night Margaret felt that her nerve would surely fail her. With an unsteady hand she drew the instrument from its green baize bag, but no sooner had she touched the strings than she felt

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that she was mistress of the situation, for the time being, at least. She recalled vividly Myo's intense love for music, the emotion he displayed whenever she played. With a prayer on her lips and a sudden flame of courage at her heart, Margaret began to play, even as she had played before on this eventful night. A hush pervaded the apartment for the first few moments. Then she could hear each man in turn begin to murmur to himself, the muttered words growing louder and louder as the music proceeded. Margaret purposely gave herself a rest between certain of the bars that she might hear more clearly.

Deeper and deeper grew the spell of the music and more pronounced the actions of the men. Myo had risen and was walking restlessly about. Pop-hung had reached for certain little bags of rice and wisps of straw that hung from the rafters, and was fingering them and talking to himself and to Myo, in turn, in a most excited manner. Such portions of the sentences as Margaret could catch had reference to something in which both the men had been engaged, a

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something not at all to the credit of either one. Ever since this happening the spirits had been angry with them, and had shown their anger by visiting them with all manner of bad luck. Now if the spell of this spirit of wondrous and beautiful music could drive the demons from their plans of evil, what joy would fill the hearts of the twain! and deep, indeed, would be their gratitude to the mourning stranger.

In one of the pauses of the music Margaret moved a little further away from Myo, who in the path he was pursuing back and forth across the floor, passed too near her to suit Margaret. As she drew nearer the wall, Margaret became conscious that her left elbow was brushing some object that rested upon the floor like the slender leg of a table, yet that slanted upward in a manner that indicated an object of a different character. Furniture, beyond the foot and a half high dining-tables, was so rare a thing in Korean homes that Margaret, in the next pause of the music, glanced upward so far as she dared, curious to see what the unusual piece of furniture could be.

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"A porter's frame," she said to herself, after the first hasty examination.

Yet this decision did not satisfy her. A porter's frame was a much more clumsy looking article, and it had more woodwork about it. Curiosity led Margaret to look again as she had opportunity, and more closely now. A smothered exclamation escaped her as she made this second examination. But for the preoccupation of the men about her, they must have noted it. Not only did Margaret give vent to this exclamation, but her heart almost stood still; then it went to beating again furiously.

The object that had engaged her attention was unmistakably an artist's easel! despite the fact that its outlines were somewhat disfigured by innumerable charms of straw, heads of rice, bits of broken pottery and the like that were hanging to it.

An artist's easel! Margaret almost dropped the guitar as the realization came to her. What other artist, of whom they had heard, save Mr. Walter had ever been along this Han River section with paint tubes and easel? There might have been one or more

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with sketch book and pencils; but he had essayed a much more elaborate equipment. His heart had been set on reproducing some of the glorious Han River and Diamond Mountain scenery in the colors Nature gave it. How well Margaret remembered the day he had set off from Seoul on that last journey! the one from which he had never returned. He had bought and equipped the sampan himself. It had been fashioned after a plan of his own. Old boatmen had warned him that she was of too light a build for the more dangerous shoals and rapids. But he was in love with his gay little craft and would exchange her for no other, especially since she had already received her christening, at which hands fairer than his own had officiated. There was no craft on all the Han, he had enthusiastically declared, that could compete with the Philippa. She was small, it was true, but she was staunch, and she had an airy grace that would carry her through the currents with the ease a duck would go. So away he had sailed gaily, with many a handkerchief waving him an adieu from the bank, many a fervent "Godspeed "

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sent after him, and with the pennant of the Philippa curling proudly from the staff he had erected for it at the bow.

Margaret turned so that the next time she raised her head she would have a still more satisfactory view of the easel. All this while the brave fingers were bringing chords of melody from the guitar. She was watching, too, as well as she could, the movements of the other occupants of the room. There had also been a stir in the direction of the women's quarters, and after sounds which gave the evidence that their occupants had pressed as near as they dared to the outer apartments in the desire to hear the music.

Drawing her fingers across the strings in a slow, deliberate movement that made the notes throb upon the air in a lingering cadence, Margaret let her eyes travel slowly up the dimensions of the easel until now they had scanned it from top to bottom. As her gaze went slowly down again, this time it was arrested by a small silver plate, somewhat tarnished, but still unmistakably silver, which was set into the easel about midway of the support on the side next to her. Suddenly

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Margaret drew herself upon her knees. All this while she had been sitting. Her eyes were now much nearer the plate on the easel. Then, as the great hat went still further down over the guitar, and she threw renewed energy into the swelling chords that filled the little apartment, Margaret's eyes were greedily devouring the letters of the name, the tracings of which she had caught upon the silver plate.

W. H. GRIFFIN. Yes, there it was plain enough! No need to study those letters one by one. The outlines were distinct enough when once she caught them in a proper light. And fortunately the flame of the rushlight shone full upon them.

The suddenness of it lost Margaret her composure. No doubt the strain had told upon her to the extent that the limit of her endurance was reached.

With a sudden, sharp cry, Margaret clutched the guitar against her, and making straight for the doorway, sprang through it and into the yard, ere the astonished Myo, Pop-hung or the latter's son could fully realize what had happened. Margaret did not pause an instant after the outside of the apartment was

reached, but went speeding along the path to the gate and thence into the street so fast as her limbs could carry her. Another moment, and there was a commotion in the room from which she had fled.

"The spell of the spirits is too great!" young Pop-hung said sympathetically.

Pop-hung senior bent over his rice-bags and wisps of straw, muttering more vehemently than ever and gesticulating, too, most violently. Had the wretched mourner left a spell of evil instead of dissipating the one already there?

But Myo neither sat down again nor made comment. Instead he stopped only long enough to recover his sandals, then he set off at the top of his speed after Margaret.

The younger Pop-hung looked aghast. "Have the spirits seized hold of the mind of this worthy man?" he asked himself. He sat for a moment deeply thinking, then all of a sudden he came to the decision that he, too, would set off at top speed in the direction taken by Myo and the mourning stranger. He wished to see just how this queer affair was to terminate.

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On sped Margaret, the one desire uppermost to reach the sampan in the quickest possible time. Apart from the fear that lent her wings, there was the spur of the astonishing discovery she had made. How intense was the desire to make it known to the others. As she slackened pace somewhat, to recover her breath, there came a mingling of sounds that sent her forward again with renewed speed. The village was unmistakably aroused. Noises as of pursuit were very evident, but whether the disturbance had arisen from the discovery of Wilbur's and Arthur's escape, or had occurred through her own flight, she could not say. At any rate, there came distinctly to her ears, though yet at a distance, the yells and shouts as of men who had been outwitted in some way.

She paused again to take breath, and now she became conscious that some persons were following her, and that they were not far away. She could plainly hear the noise of running feet. With a prayer for help, Margaret sprang forward once more. But the strain and fatigue of the night had had their effect. She felt her steps growing heavier

and heavier, her breath was coming in gasps. O, how far it seemed to the sampan! Her hat came off. She dared not stop to regain it, for there almost up with her were the sounds of those dread footsteps.

Suddenly a hand seized her. "All is indeed lost!" thought Margaret. But not so. A voice spoke hurriedly in her ear.

"Run faster!" it urged.

It was Myo! and instead of pulling her back, he was entreating her to run faster in the direction of the sampan. Indeed, he was helping her along by means of his own sturdy arm. What could it mean?

* * * * *

In the meantime, Wilbur and Arthur had made good their escape from the room. It had not taken them long to sever the fastenings of the window, which they had done as noiselessly as possible. They ran upon no one at the rear of the premises. Thanks to Kat-see's caution in behalf of his friends, not even a dog contested their passage through the grounds. Once out of the grounds they went more cautiously, avoiding the main street, and

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all other streets, so much as they could. They made the circuit of the town in safety.

"I wonder where Margaret is?" Arthur said as they were nearing the sampan. "And who could have been with her? No more than one other, I am sure, else would they not have been able to pass muster in their disguises. But wasn't it a nervy thing of Meg, though?" he added, his eyes in a glow. "Did you ever before see such a trump of a girl, Wilbur, as Meg is?"

"She is indeed one in a thousand," was Wilbur's hearty response, while his own eyes answered the glow in Arthur's.

The two boys rushed on board the sampan with the velocity of a miniature typhoon.

"Margaret! Margaret!" Arthur shouted; "here we are, you dear girl!"

But instead of either the appearance of or a reply from Margaret, both Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin stuck their heads from the little cabin, crying in joyful surprise,

"Why, Arthur! Why, Wilbur, is it indeed you?"

Then Mr. Vance added,

"But how did you get here? and at this

hour of the night? Have you really succeeded in escaping from your prison, and without aid? We did not dream that you could accomplish anything so fortunate as that."

"Escaping without aid?" echoed Arthur, and looking from one to the other in astonishment. "Why, of course, sir, we haven't done anything of the kind. It was Margaret, as you know, who helped us."

"But where is Margaret?" asked Wilbur suddenly as he looked around. "Has she not come yet, uncle, and who was with her?"

By this time Stephen, too, had appeared, and was looking at them in astonishment.

"Margaret?" repeated Mr. Vance. "Margaret aiding you two to escape? Why, truly you boys are out of your senses."

"Margaret," echoed Stephen. "Margaret in the village? Oh, say, you two are dreaming!"

"No, sir!" declared Arthur stoutly. "She was there, I tell you, and she talked to me through the wall of Kat-see's house. And she pushed this knife into the room to us and with it we cut our way out by the window."

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He held up the great carver as he spoke. There was a shout from Min, for by this time all aboard the boat were aroused. Min sprang forward and seized his knife with a "whoop-e-e!" that awoke the echoes.

"But who was with Margaret?" cried Arthur, a quiver in his voice as he looked around to see every familiar face but hers, for Sarah, too, pale and woe-begone, had pushed aside the curtains of their little nook to peep out upon the excited group.

"There was no one," said Stephen, a strange tremor in his tones.

"We will call Margaret to speak for herself," exclaimed Mr. Vance.

His nervousness was now apparent to all. Could it, by any possible chance, be true?

"Margaret! Daughter!" he cried.

Sarah's cry answered his.

"Are you two boys really safe? Then where is Margaret? She went to the village looking for you. Oh, where is Margaret?"

That was sufficient.

Mr. Vance had his answer. He swayed for a moment, then steadied himself against a support of the awning. Margaret gone!

He turned and asked a question of Sarah, then another and another. Bit by bit the story of Margaret's hazardous plan came out. Every hearer stood aghast as Sarah sobbingly revealed it.

"Oh, how could Margaret have done it?" cried Stephen.

"It is a most astonishing thing for a young girl to have undertaken!" exclaimed Dr. Griffin.

"The girl is our Margaret, sir," replied Arthur, as though this answered everything.

"We must go at once in search of her," declared Mr. Vance.

"You are right, uncle," said Wilbur. "We have delayed too long already."

"Let us start now," urged Stephen.

"How could we have waited all this time?" cried Arthur remorsefully, "when every moment is so precious."

He was about to spring upon the plank to rush ashore, and the others were on the spur of following, when there came the sound of swiftly moving feet along the river path. The next moment three forms were seen running with all speed toward the sampan. Two were

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in advance, keeping almost abreast, while the third was no more than a half dozen yards behind.

"My! I hope that is Margaret now!" cried Arthur.

"It is Margaret!" he added joyfully in the next breath; "for I can see her face and her hair. But look, sir," this to his father, "one of those men is helping her along."

It was indeed Margaret, for as Arthur sprang out upon the plank, she fell half fainting against him, thoroughly exhausted. He was not long in getting her aboard the sampan. To their astonishment he who had been assisting her in her flight proved to be Myo.

"Push off!" Myo shouted to the boatmen. "Don't waste a moment!"

Then he turned his attention to the man who had so closely followed them. He was none other than young Pop-hung.

Bending down Myo filled his hat with water, and dashed it full into the young man's face. Gasping and sputtering, Pop-hung fell over into the stream. This was Myo's golden opportunity. While Pop-hung

was splashing and floundering like a miniature whale, Myo dragged the plank aboard. Then he seized the pole from Chefoo's hand and sent the sampan gliding with the swift and graceful movement of a swan into deeper water.

He was none too soon, for they were no more than a dozen yards from shore, when other forms appeared upon the bank they had just quitted. Quickly were they joined by others, till it seemed that half the village must be gathered there. And now broke forth a pandemonium of sounds, cries, yells, and hoarsely shouted threats. But for the fact that the sampan was beyond the centre of the river, and between it and the shore so recently quitted a deep channel ran, they would assuredly have been followed.

"Fire a gun!" cried Myo to Arthur. "Fire in the air! one! two! three times!" and though wondering greatly as to Myo's sudden hostile attitude toward these, his own people, Arthur obeyed.

CHAPTER XV

THE FLAG OF THE PHILIPPA

“WELL, that is what I call a close shave!” said Arthur, as soon as he could get his breath.

“But how did you deceive them so long, Arthur?” asked Margaret. “It was such a long time before they found out you had gone.”

“Oh, that was Wilbur’s idea. We rigged up a couple of dummy figures, under a cloak of Kat-see’s, and they no doubt thought we were asleep.”

“Well,” said his sister, “it was lucky for me. But I think we owe a good deal to Myo, too.”

“So we do,” said Arthur heartily, and he turned and shook warmly the hand of the poleman.

Myo looked pleased, and quickly murmured his appreciation of Arthur’s hearty words.

Mr. Vance also spoke to the chief boatman. He, too, had words of praise, but so soon as

these were spoken, he began to question Myo a little anxiously.

"Is it safe to proceed up the river at night?"

"It will be so for three or more miles, honorable sir. There are no bad rapids near by."

"But the moon will soon be down. How then, can you see your course?"

"The moon, most worthy master, will last long enough for the sampan to be carried to a point on the opposite shore, about five miles away. A village is near by, and there we will tie up till the daylight comes."

"But will not those people," pointing backward, "find us out and trouble us there?"

"I think not, honorable sir. They are not likely to go to the bother of it. Besides, there are demons on the river at night which they will not care to encounter."

Myo said this in a hushed voice, as though he did not himself feel altogether easy about the demons.

"I noticed but few sampans about the village," spoke Wilbur reassuringly, "and the most of those were rotting and were half sunken."

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"Besides, those shots which Myo made me fire," said Arthur, "will, I am sure, have a wholesome effect."

Margaret had now recovered from her exhaustion, and was sitting with Sarah's arm about her, replying as fast as she could to an avalanche of questions. Soon the story of the brave girl's deeds and experiences of the night was out entire, with the exception of one incident. This Margaret was reserving.

"And now, my boy," said Mr. Vance, "tell us how you and Wilbur happened to get into this trouble. Is it true that you knocked over one of the mirioks?"

"Yes, father, it is."

"But it was through some accident, perhaps. I am sure you could not be so thoughtless, so rash, as to ——"

"No, indeed father," Arthur assured him as Mr. Vance paused, "we had no intention of doing any harm." Arthur glanced quickly at Wilbur, and then at Dr. Griffin. "I—we," he began again—"we have something to tell you, sir," he said to the latter. "When we first saw the mirioks and totem poles we both

laughed because they really looked so ridiculous. I am afraid that was thoughtless, and it probably started the trouble, too, for the people looked angry. But I really didn't pay much attention to them, for just then I saw something waving from one of the mirioks. I started toward it at once, and Wilbur after me. He had seen it just when I did. I reached it first, and grabbed it, but Wilbur grabbed for it, too, and as we were struggling for it good-naturedly and laughing over it we must have pushed against the pole. I suppose it was rotten, for it went right over before we knew we had touched it, and then they pounced on us, and hustled us off."

"But what was it you took from the miriok, Arthur?"

The boy put his hand into the bosom of his flannel blouse, and brought out a carefully folded piece of blue and white cloth, which he shook out to its full length.

"It was this!" he said.

Dr. Griffin gave a sudden exclamation, and seized it from the boy's hand. Wind and rain had played havoc with the once gay

fabric, but the letters embroidered on it could still be read plainly.

It was the flag of the Philippa !

There could be no mistake. It was indeed the flag of the Philippa, or, that is, what was left of the gay little pennant that had floated so proudly from its staff the morning young Walter Griffin's sampan had left Seoul on that last and fatal journey. The upper portion was torn away as though it had been suddenly rent from the staff. But the letters were plain enough, embroidered in Aunt Philippa's most beautiful stitch, aided by suggestions from each of the young Vances, in turn. How pleased Mr. Walter had been with it ! as pleased as a child. How his eyes had glowed as Aunt Philippa displayed her handiwork. It would be an omen of rare good luck, he enthusiastically declared. He would need no mascot now. Hans, the little terrier, who persisted in following him everywhere, might as well be left at home, since the flag worked by love's hand would bring all the good luck needed ; but Hans himself showed that he thought otherwise. Alas, never had gay expedition come to sadder ending !

A deep silence followed the exclamations with which Arthur's revelation was received. Margaret broke the silence at last. Turning to the young physician she said, "I, too, have something to tell you, Dr. Griffin. I made a most surprising discovery while at Pop-hung's. There was an unusual piece of furniture there that attracted my attention."

"What was the piece of furniture, Margaret?" asked her father quickly.

There was something in her tone that impressed him.

"It was an artist's easel, sir," promptly replied Margaret, and looking straight at Dr. Griffin.

"An artist's easel?" repeated the young physician nervously. "Can you mean now, Margaret, that ——"

He could go no further. The words died in his throat. Margaret took pity upon him, and answered without further delay.

"There was a silver plate on the easel. I bent near enough to read the name plainly. The plate was somewhat tarnished, but the outline of the letters was quite distinct. The name was Mr. Walter's."

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"My brother's easel! O Margaret!"

It was no shame to him that tears had sprung to his eyes.

"How did my brother's easel come in that house?" Dr. Griffin asked, his excitement plainly evident. "Can it be now, that this man, Pop-hung, knows something of my brother's last days?"

"It is more than likely," replied Mr. Vance. Then he paused a moment, as if in thought, ere he added, "But I cannot understand about the easel. I thought, Charles, that all your brother's effects were wrecked when the sampan went down in the rapids near Nangchon."

"So I was told again and again. Indeed, I was given certain broken and battered bits of wreckage about which there could be no doubt."

"But was the remains of the easel among them?" asked Mr. Vance.

"That I cannot now state positively; but it seems to me not. Indeed, I am certain now that it was not."

"I am sure I am not mistaken, Dr. Griffin," said Margaret, with a positiveness that left no room for doubt.

"I must speak at once to Myo," declared Dr. Griffin, rising in some agitation.

"Do not disturb him now," begged Mr. Vance. "He is engrossed with the task of getting the sampan safely up the river. Wait at least until he has it at the anchorage proposed; and then, my dear friend," he added in low, earnest tones, "we must go at it gently. We cannot afford now, for many reasons, to lose Myo."

"Well," said Arthur, "for my part I think Myo has acted very strangely about all this. I'm beginning to wonder if we can trust him at all."

"It seems we must, Arthur, for a time at least. There is no other course open to us at present. I think," he added after a moment, "there is something on Myo's mind that causes him to act in this way. It has plainly appeared to me during the last few days that Myo is restless concerning some matter he is anxious to have adjusted. It may be that some plan on which he greatly depends has gone awry, or there is other business trouble of a perplexing nature."

"Very likely," agreed Dr. Griffin. "They

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told me in Seoul that the old poleman is a man of many interests; in fact that he is hastening to get rich."

"I believe, uncle," commented Wilbur, "that this business is in some way connected with old Pop-hung. You remember how curiously they both acted that day on the river?"

"We remember it very well," said Mr. Vance, speaking for Dr. Griffin and himself.

"Then," continued Wilbur, "Myo's prolonged stay in this village, which is the home of Pop-hung, and Margaret's finding them together under such suggestive circumstances; both these facts, uncle, point very clearly to a connection of some kind between Myo and Pop-hung."

"The matter seems clear enough, Wilbur," agreed his uncle.

They had been talking in low tones, for the head poleman was not many feet away, though they could see that he was very intently engaged with the business of getting the sampan safely through the currents.

"It is strange," remarked Arthur suddenly, "how indifferent Myo was to our imprisonment."

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"He declared to me," said Margaret, "as we were running toward the sampan that he knew nothing about it until this very evening, no more than an hour or so, in fact, prior to the time I appeared at Pop-hung's. He had been miles away from the village and had not returned until the set of the sun on this evening."

Arthur gave a prolonged whistle. Myo surely must have heard that. But as he was used to Arthur's whistles he paid no attention.

"What a fishy story!" exclaimed Arthur. "I knew the old rogue was pretty bad, but I didn't think he was as wicked as this."

"The truth is," said Wilbur, "we both had the thought at one time that Myo had had something to do with our arrest and imprisonment."

"That we did," assented Arthur, "but since we have seen how ready he was to help Margaret, and how promptly he came to our aid in getting us away from that trouble just a little while ago, my opinion has changed."

"I am glad to hear you give Myo that justice," said Margaret. "But for him I am sure I never could have reached the sampan

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in time. I am also fully convinced now that he recognized me at Pop-hung's almost so soon as I began to play."

"Myo is really good when you know him well," declared Stephen earnestly. "He has been about a great deal, and has so many interesting things to tell."

"Oh, but he has such dreadful eyes!" interposed Sarah with a shudder. "I am sure I never could get to the place where I could trust him."

"But, my dear," reasoned Margaret, "the poor man can't help the appearance of his eyes. I must admit, though, that their effect on one is rather trying. But I cannot believe he will do us any harm, and he certainly has come to our rescue this time."

"Well," said Dr. Griffin, "I must have a talk with him in the morning, and if possible I will go back to the village. I can't rest till I have seen old Pop-hung myself."

CHAPTER XVI

A CATASTROPHE

MR. VANCE fully agreed with Dr. Griffin that they should not only return, but should search the village thoroughly. "But," he said, "we cannot get the necessary papers until we reach the prefecture of Nang-chon, where we can have telegraphic communication with Seoul. And we must remember, Charles, the slowness with which Korean law machinery moves. But one thing is certain, we must give up all thought of further progress up the Han until this matter of a return to the village for a thorough examination receives our attention."

"You are right, father," spoke Arthur quickly. "We can't think of our own pleasure until we know more definitely how these effects of poor Mr. Walter came to be in that village."

But it was now long past the time that they ought to have been in bed. All felt the need of rest. Three of the party, at least, were

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worn out from the trying experiences through which they had so recently passed.

"I shall speak to Myo very early in the morning," Dr. Griffin remarked to Mr. Vance as they entered their cabin.

The young physician slept little that night. His mind was in a tumult. Shortly after daybreak, he arose, dressed himself, and sought Myo.

The head poleman was just awaking from his own nap, for he had brought the sampan to a safe mooring two or three hours before, and had then turned the remainder of the watch for the night over to Kang.

Myo met Dr. Griffin's adroit questionings with replies equally adroit, though so far as the artist's easel was concerned, he told a very straight story. Young Griffin had been in the village. He had spent a week or more at Pop-hung's. Ostensibly he had been sketching in the neighborhood, but Myo knew, and so did others, that he was really digging for treasure in the side of the hill, Nippoo-san. When he had gone away further up the stream he had asked Pop-hung's permission to leave the easel until his return, as

he did not wish at that time to be bothered with it.

As to the pennant of the Philippa, Myo did not seem so assured. Indeed, he almost broke down when this was mentioned. He was overcome with astonishment to learn that the boys had taken it from the miriok and brought it aboard. He began to prophesy all manner of dire calamity that would overtake them in consequence.

He did not know that the pennant was attached to the miriok, he declared, but since it was, it ought to have been left there. He trembled when it was shown to him, crying out that the demons would surely be angry and that naught but misfortune would befall them. He begged to be allowed to go back to the village and restore it to the miriok; but, of course, this petition was not for a moment considered.

"That would be very silly," Margaret reasoned with him. "The pennant has no right there. It belonged to Dr. Griffin's brother, who is dead, and the doctor alone has the right to say what shall be done with it."

But this did not by any means convince Myo. He continued to moan that the spirits were angry, that one in particular could not be appeased. To add to their dismay, Myo now returned to his former habit of sitting in the stern with bowed head, while he muttered to himself and beat himself in the breast. Two or three times also Margaret and Arthur saw him looking at the picture of himself which young Walter Griffin had drawn.

"He surely can't be making a fetish out of his own picture," remarked Arthur in disgust. Yet it did look so.

Early in the morning of the second day following this one Kang came to Mr. Vance in great distress. Something was wrong with Myo. He seemed to have lost his nerve entirely and was now declaring there were rapids not far away through which he was sure they would never get safely. The sampan would go to pieces on the rocks, and the spirits would have them all ere the day was done. There was one spirit in particular, he kept crying out, whose face was constantly looking at him from the water. When they reached the rapids the spirit would be there. It would

cling to the rocks and would swing long arms, forbidding them to go by.

Kang was himself shaken by Myo's behavior. Yet he said quite bravely that if the occupants would leave the sampan after the noon meal and take to the path along the river, which was a very good one for some distance in the neighborhood of the rapids, he, Kang, would do the very best he could to get the sampan through under Myo's direction.

It was now definitely decided that, after the noon meal, they would go ashore at a spot just below the rapids, that had been designated by Kang. If the sampan went safely through, they would have a walk of only about three miles. They could then return to the boat and proceed on the way to Nangchon, which they hoped to reach at dusk that evening.

"We must each take a change of underclothing," declared Mr. Vance, "and such of our personal effects as we can conveniently carry."

"Why, father," laughed Margaret, "you talk as though everything we leave here was surely going to the bottom."

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"Well, my dear, one never knows what is to happen; and I have learned, even in my peaceful life, to prepare for the conflict, which fortunately, so far has never arrived. Even with this happy record to fall back upon, I, nevertheless, advise that we prepare ourselves for an emergency, which I can plainly see from Kang's conduct he anticipates."

The boys did not take very cheerfully to the idea of carrying the goods from the sampan. Almost unconsciously Arthur scowled at Myo in passing, and even Wilbur did not look very good-natured as he nodded to him an adieu. Stephen alone of the boys faced cheerfully the new turn in affairs. He was longing to get on shore for a sight of the mountains which Kang had told him presented such a magnificent view from a bluff along the river bank.

"But for that old Myo we would never have had to go to all this bother," grumbled Arthur. "I do wish he could have behaved himself like a sane being instead of going on in this wild way about spirits, demons and such nonsense. I declare, I could shake all that silliness out of him."

"As if such a thing would be possible," commented Wilbur, who, truth to tell, was himself thoroughly provoked with Myo. "You might shake and shake forever for all the good it would do. I didn't know he could be so idiotic."

"O but, Arthur, Wilbur," remonstrated Margaret, "the poor man can't help his superstitions. We ought really to pity him, poor thing! Then have you so soon forgotten what he did for us two nights ago?"

No, they had not forgotten. They felt ashamed now of their hasty speaking, and so admitted.

Dr. Griffin was unusually sad this morning. They were now, he had reason to believe, not many miles from the spot where his brother's sampan had been wrecked. It was somewhere in the neighborhood of Nang-chon; he did not know positively where. There was a conflicting opinion on the part of the villagers he had examined, with reference to the locality where the calamity had occurred, though the most of them had agreed in saying that it had happened near Nang-chon.

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He for one was glad enough to go ashore. The river had only haunting suggestions. Perhaps deep down in some dark pool over which they might pass, his brother's body lay entombed.

All noted his sad and dejected air, and Margaret had whispered to Wilbur and Sarah the cause of it.

"Poor Dr. Griffin!" murmured Sarah; "how I do wish he could find out something definite about his brother. If he could only know where he is buried it would be some satisfaction, though a melancholy one."

They bade cheerful good-bye to their polemen, then stood for a moment watching the sampan as, under Kang's and Chefoo's deft strokes, it was poled again toward the current, some twenty feet or more off shore. Min had elected to go with the sampan, declaring that, as he couldn't possibly carry all the cooking utensils and eatables ashore, he intended to stand by them.

At the spot where they had landed the river widened out considerably, to contract into a channel of no more than forty feet in width a half mile further on, where it ran

between high bluffs and over masses of upheaved rock.

The party ashore turned aside from the path, at the point Stephen indicated, to climb the bluff along the river's bank for the magnificent view Kang promised. He had not seen it himself, but Myo had told him of it. They were not disappointed, for it was indeed a glorious view of valleys shut in by mountain ranges that rose one above the other, till the furthestmost of all seemed to pierce their way into the very dome of heaven.

"There is nothing in our Rockies to surpass that!" declared Wilbur.

"Oh, look!" cried Stephen excitedly; "they are having a dreadful time with the sampan!"

They all turned in the direction indicated. The bluff was almost bare of vegetation at this point. It did not rise sheer from the water, but sloped somewhat gradually. The sampan was in plain view some fifty or sixty feet below them.

There seemed to be a succession of rapids. The sampan had passed through two of these, which, to the unpracticed eyes looking on,

appeared to be the very worst of all. It was now approaching a third crest, and its present precarious situation, it seemed, was caused by the counter flow of currents. Kang and Chefoo were doing heroic poling, while Kodong was steering and bending to his task with earnestness and determination.

Myo was standing by Kang. He seemed to be giving directions, but every now and then he would throw his arms up gesticulating wildly; then look around upon the stream and move his shoulders from side to side, as though he were going through some incantation to evoke the aid of spirits.

Almost as they looked they saw the sampan spin round violently as if all control of it had been lost. Then it reared upward like a frightened horse. It stood almost perpendicular for a moment, to come down upon the rocks the next with a sickening crash plainly heard by the startled group upon the bluff.

Margaret and Sarah closed their eyes, their hearts faint with horror. When they dared open them again, through an irresistible impulse to learn the worst of what had happened in the river, parts of the wrecked

sampan were being tossed hither and thither by the violent current. Strewn amid the wrecked timbers were portions of bedding and of clothing, boxes of supplies, camp-chairs, and other articles of the sampan's cargo.

It was indeed a catastrophe, and all thought of the sore straits in which they would be left by the wreck of the sampan was for the time lost sight of in their keen anxiety for the lives of those aboard.

The men were now seen struggling in smoother water. The force with which the sampan had leaped upward had thrown it partly over the rocks, and the boatmen, with the instincts of their training, had taken advantage of their opportunity to spring into the less violent current ere the boat came down again with a crash upon the rocks.

Suddenly a shout from Arthur broke the terrible strain.

"Do look at Min! If he isn't swimming after the coop of fowls, instead of trying to get himself out of that whirlpool!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE FACE IN THE MOONLIGHT

WITH varied exclamations those who had witnessed the wreck of the sampan from the bluff began to make their way as quickly as they could toward a depression in the bank a hundred yards or so away. It was very likely that those struggling in the current would try to land there.

One by one they came ashore, dripping and well-nigh exhausted, yet each had managed to save a small portion of his effects, while Min triumphantly dragged ashore the coop of chickens, the inmates of which were, like himself, gasping for breath. Boy and fowls had alike come near to drowning.

"Got to go to monastery now," said Min to Arthur between his gasps. "Half starve there, for monks have no fowl, no fish, no flesh. Min save fowls one, two, three, four, five, six," holding up a finger for each as he counted. "Three good meals anyhow before starve!" and he grinned delightedly.

"Give me your hand, Min," cried Arthur enthusiastically. "You are the sage of this crowd, and no mistake. Your wisdom isn't to be questioned. But is it true the monks will starve us? What will they feed us on, anyhow?" solicitously.

"Pine nuts and honey," declared Min with a doleful shake of the head.

"No more than that?" asked Arthur aghast.

"No more!" and Min's expression was even more gloomy.

But where was Myo? All had come ashore now but the head poleman. A close search failed to locate him.

"I fear he went down in the rapids, honorable sir," said Kang sorrowfully to Mr. Vance. "He did not seem to have heart for anything. All the way he kept declaring that the demons would surely wreak vengeance on us; and once or twice he cried out sharply that there was a face in the water and long arms that beckoned to him."

Kang shivered as he said these words, but it may have been from the chill of his wet clothing.

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"I saw him as the boat was about to crash down again," Chefoo added. "He had his arms flung upward as though he were going to leap. I fear he failed to make the leap safely," and he, too, shivered.

"Poor Myo," said Margaret, her eyes filling with tears; "how dreadful if he really came to his death in the Han!"

"Let us hope not," spoke Sarah earnestly. "Perhaps he escaped to the opposite shore."

Others shared this hope, until Kang gave it as his opinion that this would have been well-nigh impossible. The banks were entirely too precipitous on that side.

They lingered many moments, glancing up and down the stream, searching every point within reach of their vision, but without result.

"He may have found a landing some yards below this," remarked Wilbur.

Again Kang showed the futility of the hope. Had Myo drifted down stream he would have been carried again through the rapids.

"I am afraid he is gone, poor fellow!" said Mr. Vance with feeling. Despite the suspi-

cions he had begun to have of late of Myo, the head poleman's personality was such it had made a deep impression on him.

"Min spoke of a monastery," said Dr. Griffin as he turned to Kang. "Is there one near at hand?"

It was no more than two miles away, he was assured.

"But must we go to the monastery?" asked Arthur dubiously, as a look of commiseration passed between him and Min. "Why not go to the next village, father?"

"Because that is more than four miles away," replied Mr. Vance, who had been in further conversation with Kang, "and on the opposite side of the river."

Arthur whistled.

"Well, I suppose that settles it. We shall have to take the monastery."

"This is the second one, I understand," said Dr. Griffin to Mr. Vance, "in the chain of monasteries, forty-eight in all, that terminates in the very heart of the Diamond Mountain region. It cannot be so far from here," he added in lower tones, "that the one we desire particularly to visit is situated."

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"Only some eight or ten miles, I believe," replied Mr. Vance.

"Do you think the monks will receive us, uncle?" asked Wilbur anxiously.

"We can go and try them, my boy," his uncle replied somewhat evasively. "They are said to treat kindly all strangers whom misfortune has stranded, and as we are now in that condition, I think they will not turn us away. I have heard," he continued, "that the monks are really benevolent, and that each monastery maintains a horde of hangers-on of every description, many who are sick and in other conditions of helplessness, while a number seek alms of the monks through indolence."

"But these are natives, no doubt," said Arthur quickly. "Will they receive us as readily?"

His father did not reply. He was anxiously debating in his own mind this same question.

"The monks do not like foreigners any more than some of the people in the villages do," declared Stephen. "Have you forgotten, father, how badly Mr. Epting was treated?"

"What do you think about it, Kang?" asked Arthur, suddenly turning to the boatman.

Kang appeared confused. No doubt he had not expected so direct a question.

He was sure they would receive no ill-treatment, he managed to say at length.

From the manner in which Kang spoke, it was quite apparent that he and his associate boatmen did not intend to seek the hospitality of the monasteries.

"Why, hear him!" Arthur said somewhat indignantly to his father. "Is he going to send us where he won't go himself?"

"Hush, Arthur," his father said reprov- ingly. "You must not allude in so rough a way to Kang. He has scruples which he cannot overcome," he added in still lower tones. "Most Koreans despise heartily Buddhism and its shaven priests. I think Kang would prefer to spend the night on the river bank rather than go to the monastery for shelter."

"But, father, if they are going to the vil- lage, why cannot we go, too?"

"For the very good reason, Arthur, that it is twice as far as the monastery, and there is a

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deep ford between. Have you not heard that the settlement is on the other side of the river?"

"I am sure we shall not find it so dreadful at the monastery," spoke Margaret blithely. "Kang has just told me that foreigners have been there before and were fairly well treated. Besides, it is a Red Arrow monastery."

"Why, what do you mean by that?" asked Sarah quickly.

"One where the Government has some supervision. The red arrow is the King's token of approval. The chang-sop, or head abbot, is elected by the Board of Rites in Seoul, and has to answer to them for any conduct they would not approve."

"O bother the Board of Rites in Seoul!" exclaimed Arthur. "If they don't take any more trouble to investigate the conduct of the abbots than they do to look into other matters they are supposed to attend to, you may rest assured that these old chang-sops have things pretty much their own way."

It was now decided that they would seek the monastery without delay, especially as those who had been in the river were shiver-

ing in their wet clothing, "and ought to be moving on," as Dr. Griffin stated most emphatically.

Kang conducted them to the foot of the pathway leading upward along a winding course to the monastery, known as "Chang-an-sa (The Temple of Eternal Rest)." The natives, however, call it "Tan-pa" or crop-hair, because of the shaven heads of its monks. There were other Chang-an-sas, they knew, on the Han, one more notable than all the others, far up among the rugged peaks of the Diamond Mountain section. This Chang-an-sa both Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin had ardently desired to reach, but now realized that the hope must be abandoned. But the near-by monastery, where they hoped to gain information of Walter Griffin, they must visit so soon as they could.

Shortly after starting on their climb, Kang told them, they would come to a narrow bridge spanning a foaming torrent. Here they were to turn to the right, and from this point they would have no trouble in keeping the pathway, as it was very well defined.

The monastery, he further informed them,

stood upon a plateau a mile or so from the river bank. After crossing the fifth bridge they would come to a regular roadway which led downward to another point on the river.

They found it a tortuous climb and many times had to pause for breath. All about them were evidences of volcanic upheaval.

"Years ago this slope has been in the throes of a mighty earthquake," said Dr. Griffin, as he paused to examine more critically a mass of jagged boulders.

"Is Korea much of an earthquake country?" asked Wilbur.

"Well, we have a considerable shake now and then," replied Mr. Vance, "and once in a while we have an upheaval that does much damage, destroying not only property, but life."

"Oh, it is nothing like so bad as it is in Japan," said Stephen quickly. "Think of living in Tokio, where they have, on an average, one earthquake shock every day."

"You wouldn't get me to live in Tokio," announced Sarah emphatically, "nor even to visit it."

Margaret smiled at her.

"You would be very foolish, Sarah, not to go if ever you have the chance, for it is truly one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and there are so many wonderful things to see."

"But I would be so afraid of the earthquakes, I wouldn't enjoy a single thing," persisted Sarah.

The way grew wider and more beautiful at every step. A forest of pines and firs stretched all about them. In some portions of it, though the sun was yet more than two hours high, the light was like that of twilight. Every bridge seemed to span a spot more picturesque than the last. Each of these bridges consisted of no more than a single huge log, roughly hewn to a flat surface, with a rude hand-railing of slender saplings knotted together with ropes of wistaria. All about the edges of the chasm grew tall, graceful ferns, while many feet below the torrent leaped and foamed. They could hear, too, the far-away murmur of other streams and the muffled boom of leaping cascades.

"From all appearances," Dr. Griffin remarked to Mr. Vance, "this hill would present

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tempting opportunities for the subterranean action of streams."

"Oh, that reminds me," cried Arthur suddenly. "What do you think Kang told me? He said that if our sampan had not been wrecked, and we had been of the mind to do it, we could have reached the monastery by way of a subterranean passage, a real underground waterway. It is entered from the river through the mouth of a cave, not far from the point where the wreck of our sampan occurred. The only difficulty, as Kang admitted," Arthur concluded with a whimsical smile, "is that only the priests know its intricacies, and that the landing-place at the monastery is also a mystery. So in order to have made this underground journey successfully, we would have been compelled to have secured one of the monks for our guide."

"Of course we could have done that easily," remarked Wilbur sarcastically.

About half way up they struck the broad, smooth roadway of which Kang had told them. It was a fine piece of work, and showed not only patience, but skill.

"These monks are surely fine road build-

ers," declared Arthur admiringly. Then the rest of his sentence was finished in a growl, "But I don't see why they couldn't have built down to the river on this side while they were about it."

"O you greedy fellow!" cried Margaret, "you are always wanting more than is at hand. You should be satisfied with the gifts, not the gods, that the monks have provided, and not be, like *Oliver Twist*, crying for more."

"I hope this is not the only gift they'll provide," said Wilbur, nodding toward the roadway. "I hope there'll be the gift of some sort of supper. I must say this climb has made me altogether forget that I had anything like a lunch at noon."

"Oh, don't you despair," sang out Arthur blithely. "Here is Min close behind with the coop of fowls."

True enough Min had hung bravely to his coop through all the steep and arduous climb. As though to give indisputable evidence of their fitness to be turned into a most appetizing meal, the fowls had now set up a loud squawking.

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"Three cheers and a tiger for Min!" cried Stephen.

"Now don't you be calling down the tiger," warned Margaret. "You know Kang told us there were tigers in the forests about the monastery? I am sure we wouldn't relish meeting one at this lonely spot, even if it were intended as a prize for Min."

"Min no want tiger," declared the young Chinese with a vigorous shake of his head.

"He is satisfied with the fowls at present," declared Stephen, which remark Min proved quite true by grinning broadly and shaking the fowls again, till they set up another loud squawking.

They passed numerous shrines by the way before which offerings of fruit and food were set. The path, winding along a course that gave gradual access to the summit, passed under numerous arched gateways. The last of all was the lofty and magnificently-carved Hang-sal-mun, or Gateway of the Red Arrow. Beyond it lay a wide-stretching grassy plateau, with towering mountain peaks walling it in on every side.

In the centre of the plateau stood the mon-

astery, an immense building of stone, heavily tiled, with carvings of woodwork covering it here and there, freshly tinted and gilded. The monks had scores of workmen at their command, it was said, and almost daily some renovation was going on.

Temples large and small clustered about. There was also a pavilion, where religious dramas were enacted, several bell houses, any number of shrines covered by quaint, carved roofs, additional dormitories, a nunnery, a refectory for the abbot, and various outbuildings of all sizes and appearances.

"We have here," said Mr. Vance in low tones to Dr. Griffin, "full evidence of the declaration that 'Buddhism knows well how to possess itself of all the most beautiful in nature.' The place is a paradise."

A crowd of monks and boys curiously eyed their approach. There was another feeling, too, very evident in the faces of several as our travelers drew near. One or two of the priests were fat and good-natured looking, but the most of them had forbidding countenances.

An elderly monk, rather haughty in his appearance, which they took as an evidence

of his rank, now stepped out from among the others, and demanded their business.

Mr. Vance, in response to Dr. Griffin's request, replied politely that they were shipwrecked travelers and had come beseeching the hospitality of the monastery for a short time. He then gave a detailed account of the recent destruction of their sampan in the rapids and of the departure of their boatmen to a neighboring town, where it was hoped another sampan could be secured. Until this arrangement was made the monks of Chang-an-sa were most humbly besought to care for the stranded travelers.

The monk eyed them critically for a few moments, and then made answer in tones that were fully in keeping with the haughtiness of his appearance.

He really had naught to do with a case of this kind. The plea must go to the san-tong, or sub-abbot, who was acting in the absence of the abbot, or Father Superior. If they would produce their passport, he supposed the matter of their entertainment for a day or so might be arranged.

These last words he spoke in a manner

which said quite plainly that he was of the opinion that they had no such valuable article as a passport in their possession, or if they had, it was not of the class to carry much weight.

But the kwan-ja was at hand this time, and, having dispatched it by a messenger to the sub-abbot, the haughty looking priest turned away as though he had completely washed his hands of the affair. Two or three followed his example, but by far the larger number remained, still eyeing curiously the group of travelers. They pointed toward them every now and then, following these movements by remarks among themselves which evoked both amusement and earnest discussion. Especially did the two young girls serve as targets for their curiosity. Their fair skins, which exposure to the sun on the Han had but slightly tanned, their luxuriant, glossy hair and novel style of dress, each alike served to arouse both curiosity and excite comment.

It was an embarrassing situation for our friends, and they were indeed rejoiced when the messenger from the sub-abbot ar-

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rived and there was relaxation from the strain.

The san-tong sent a very courteous reply. The passport was of such a character as to insure them the hospitality of the monastery. His special representative, who had returned with the kwan-ja, instead of the messenger dispatched by the haughty priest, was empowered to show them every courtesy. In the morning he, the san-tong, would grant them a special audience. Meanwhile, they were to be housed in the best quarters the monastery afforded.

"Well, this is indeed a most unexpected change from the disagreeable to the agreeable," said Arthur in an undertone to Wilbur. "I began to think we were going to be stampeded from the place like a herd of cattle. That old sub-abbot must indeed be a gentleman. I feel like telling him so if I ever get the opportunity."

"I heard the young priest tell father that he was to conduct us to the royal pavilion," said Stephen. "That is where the representatives of the King stay when they come on business."

"Phew!" Arthur gave a prolonged whistle under his breath. "Well, we are stepping up! I shall expect to hear next that we have been mistaken for members of the royal family."

"Hardly," remarked Wilbur dryly, "with our complexion and cropped hair."

It was indeed true. They were conducted by the young priest to apartments in the pavilion, where heretofore none but distinguished guests had ever been housed. This young man, who was a Japanese, O-to-ri by name, as they afterward learned, had a very intelligent and pleasing face, which inspired them with trust, and gave them a more assured feeling than any they had had since starting for the monastery.

They had found considerable change in the temperature since ascending the slope. As night approached, it grew quite chilly. They were pleased, therefore, when O-to-ri, returning with two bearers who brought their evening meal, informed them that he would have some fires kindled in the brick ovens that warmed the pavilion. They were pleased to hear it then, but when the promise was ful-

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filled, the result was by no means the enjoyment anticipated. Either O-to-ri was lavish with fuel, hoping to please them, or the cold was not so great as imagined ; at any rate the small apartments soon became almost unbearable with heat.

"I think they must intend to roast us and serve us as a meal for the haughty monk!" exclaimed Arthur, as he mopped away with his handkerchief at the perspiration trickling down his cheeks.

"You must keep your windows closed, honorable sirs," had been O-to-ri's parting injunction. "There are tigers on the mountains, and they sometimes are bold enough at night to make visits to the monastery."

Sarah greeted this announcement with a nervous little squeak, and after it began to grow so uncomfortably warm declared to Margaret that she would never consent to have their window opened if she turned to a puddle of grease. Despite the temperature of the room, Sarah dropped off to sleep. She was thoroughly exhausted by the excitement of the day and the hard climb of the hill.

But Margaret could not sleep. The atmos-

phere of the apartment was almost stifling. She heard the boys open their window, and was sure her father and Dr. Griffin had done the same. She felt that she must have a few breaths of pure air, tigers or no tigers.

"But I will not leave the window unguarded after it is opened," she resolved. "I will keep careful watch until it is closed again."

The night was now well advanced. The bell, which they had been told rang at nine o'clock for the retirement of the monks, had sent forth its warning boom fully two hours before. All was now silent in and around the monastery.

The rush of pure, cold air as Margaret opened the window was delightful. She leaned far out, desiring to have its full refreshment. As she did so, a noise startled her. Some one, it seemed, had stumbled against a pile of blocks the carpenters had left from a great pine they had been sawing into lumber. Margaret's first thought was naturally of tigers, and she was about to close the window hastily, thinking that one of the dreaded beasts had really come, when a second

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glance showed her that the form, now righting itself, was that of a man.

The moon was shining clearly and there were no shadows falling upon this particular spot. As the man recovered his balance and turned his face toward the window, Margaret almost cried out in her astonishment. The face was that of Myo-Sang! There could be no mistake about it. He was no more than five paces from the window. His hat had fallen off, and he was looking straight at Margaret.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE STARTLING EFFECT OF A NAME

It was Myo beyond a doubt. For one moment he stood gazing fixedly at Margaret. Then he started forward as though he would approach the window and address her; but, seemingly having changed his mind, he turned hastily away, muttering, "Wait! Wait!"

Margaret was so startled by this sudden appearance of Myo, whom she had fully believed dead, that she stood motionless and voiceless, though longing to call out to him. How had he managed to escape when no trace of him had been seen, and all believed him dead? But ere she could address Myo, he had disappeared.

"He will no doubt come to us in the morning," she said to herself as she closed the window. "He must have met with very trying experiences, and has been greatly delayed in reaching the monastery. I hope he will find a comfortable shelter for the night, poor fellow!"

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Sarah was sleeping soundly. The outside air, entering by the open window, had cooled the room considerably. The fires, too, must have abated, for the temperature was decidedly more endurable.

Margaret, however, could not sleep, though her eyelids were heavy and her limbs ached. Her mind was filled with exciting thoughts and suspicions. But she hesitated to mention them to the others, especially to Arthur. He would be sure to exclaim, as he had done on other occasions, "Such vivid imagination as girls do have!"

She had but little more than dropped into fitful slumber, when the great booming of the monastery bell, rung at four o'clock for the arousing of the priests, awakened her with a start. Sarah, too, awoke with a sharp scream.

"Oh, what is that?" she cried, wildly clutching Margaret. "Has the roof fallen in, or is it an earthquake?"

"Neither," smiled Margaret reassuringly. "It is the bell calling the priests to services in the temple. Buddhism, you know, is very devotional. Even the boys are taught to remember that 'prayer is better than sleep.'"

The bell had no sooner ceased its booming, than a number of other bells of varied sizes, and running the full gamut of tone, took up the chorus. As though to add as much as possible to the din, numerous cymbals and gongs were being beaten.

Margaret heard the boys grumbling in the next apartment and Arthur's voice raised high above the others in vigorous protest.

"What an outrageous din! How can a fellow sleep?"

After this commotion ceased and all was quiet again, save the far-away droning of the priests as they chanted the praises of Buddha, Margaret fell into heavy slumber, and did not awaken therefrom until the sun was slanting full through the window, which Sarah had opened.

Margaret arose and dressed hastily, then made her way to the apartment where the others were already assembled for breakfast.

"Here is our sleeping princess at last!" cried Arthur. "It is something unusual, Meg, for you to be the last one up."

"I did not sleep at all the first part of the night," said Margaret somewhat wearily as

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she passed her hand over her eyes, the lids of which still had a dull, heavy ache.

"Came near being roasted, I suppose," exclaimed Arthur again. "Now, why didn't you girls have courage enough, yes, and common sense, too," he added somewhat patronizingly, "to have opened your window, for a while at least, tigers or no tigers."

"I did open it," replied Margaret quietly; "and kept it open until the room became considerably cooled."

Sarah started up with a little protesting cry.

"Oh, Meg, how dared you? And to think I didn't know it! Now suppose the tigers had come?"

"But as you did not know it, but slept soundly through it all, and no tigers appeared, why should you care now?" asked Margaret slyly.

"I am sure you two girls are hungry enough this morning," remarked Wilbur with a smile, "to do justice to the fowls which Min has prepared."

"Min is a jewel!" declared Arthur, his eyes in a glow. "The way he clung to that

coop of fowls through everything, the stares and protests of the priests, and their refusal to allow him to come through the temple grounds—compelling him to go around by the back way—deserve our unbounded gratitude. Min, old fellow,” making a profound bow to the smiling young Chinese, “if I were the king, you should be invested with the highest insignia of rank before night.”

“Min declares that the priests themselves keep fowls and goats,” said Stephen, “that he saw them as he went around the premises; in pens and coops at two or three places, as though they were waiting to be killed.”

“I knew those fat, well-fed looking old monks could not subsist on fare like this alone,” declared Arthur, as he pointed to the fruit, honey and wheaten cakes that had been served them for breakfast.

“I am sorry you did not sleep well, my daughter,” Mr. Vance said solicitously to Margaret, as he made a place for her on the mat beside him.

“I am afraid my brain was too active,” she replied, giving him a reassuring smile. “Besides,” she raised her voice now, and looked

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around upon those gathered about the repast, "I had the shock of seeing a most unexpected visitor."

"Not a tiger?" squeaked Sarah. "O Margaret Vance, you said——"

"Who was the visitor?" asked her father suddenly. "Surely no one came to the pavilion after we had retired, and we knew nothing of it!"

"It was no one who came within the pavilion, father, or even quite to it. This visitor lingered without, but as I was standing beside the open window, and he was no more than five or six yards away, I saw him quite plainly. It was Myo!"

Had she sent a stone rattling down among the platters before them, they could not have been more astonished.

"Myo!" ejaculated Arthur. "Why, Myo was drowned in the Han! Oh, pshaw, Meg, you were dreaming. The heat turned your head."

"No, I was not, Arthur. I assure you, I was as wide awake as I am at this moment. It was Myo plain enough. He stumbled over a pile of wood as he came toward the window,

and that first attracted my attention to him. At first he seemed to wish to talk to me. Then he suddenly seemed to change his mind, and moved away, muttering, 'Wait! Wait!' I was too astonished to call to him."

"It was Myo, sure enough, I am satisfied," spoke Mr. Vance. "Margaret could not give so clear an account as this if she had been only dreaming."

"It was Myo beyond a doubt," reasserted Margaret. "His hat was off and I saw his features plainly."

"Then of course he escaped drowning in the Han," remarked Dr. Griffin, "but it seems miraculous."

"The old boatman knew every current in the Han," replied Mr. Vance. "He told me so again and again. He no doubt took advantage of one that encircled the rapids and so got himself out."

"If it is Myo," said Dr. Griffin again, "and there no longer seems a doubt of it," here he bowed to Margaret, "he will surely not be long in making a visit to us."

"Certainly such must be his intention," Mr. Vance replied quickly, "or he would not have

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sought the monastery. He would have followed the others to the village."

"I am glad the old fellow has turned up again," said Arthur. "I certainly was sorry to think he had been drowned. And he can help us with our new arrangements better than any one else."

"That he can," agreed Dr. Griffin. "I was just wondering how we were going to manage without Myo."

They now began to talk over their plans. Of course, the trip into the Diamond Mountain section would have to be abandoned, as they had lost their supplies, their bedding, and most of their clothing. Fortunately, owing to Kang's foresight, each had two changes of underclothing, which would have to do them until they got back to Seoul. In addition Wilbur had saved his rifle, Arthur had his camera, Margaret her guitar, and Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin certain of their effects which they prized highly, and an amount of money now doubly valuable in their present straits.

The plan finally settled upon was to send Myo to Nang-chon, instructing him to stop

by the way for Kang and the other boatmen. At this large town there would assuredly be an opportunity to secure such a sampan as they desired for the homeward trip. If not, then they would have to fall back upon the service of ponies.

A day or so later Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin would go to Nang-chon themselves, not only to look at the sampan secured, but to perfect the arrangements for a return to the village where young Walter Griffin's easel and the flag of the Philippa had been found. They also intended, if it could possibly be arranged, to visit the monastery further up the Han, where, it was believed, Walter Griffin had spent several days ere setting out on his return to Seoul.

Dr. Griffin's heart burned with the desire to learn more of the last days of his brother, and who could blame him? Certainly not one of those who now discussed with hushed voices the probability of finding that lonely grave on the Han. At the time of Dr. Griffin's first visit it had been asserted by more than one of those he examined that young Walter Griffin's body had been found and interred ashore.

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Just where the spot was, however, no one could say definitely.

Moment after moment passed, and still Myo did not come. Finally Wilbur and Arthur declared they were going to look for him. If he were anywhere on the monastery grounds, they would search until they found him. It was a shame for him to tantalize them so.

In an hour's time, however, they returned looking much crestfallen. They had searched everywhere they had been permitted, and had made close enquiries of several. No one had seen Myo or knew of his present whereabouts.

"Margaret Vance," declared Arthur, as he turned toward her with a comical expression, "if you did not have as steady a head as that of any girl living——"

"Why not add, 'or boy either,'" suggested Wilbur with a twinkle of the eye.

"Well, then," resumed Arthur, "as steady a head as that of any boy living, myself and Mr. Ames included," with an overwhelming bow to Wilbur, "I would say that last night it was, with reference to Myo, as wobbly as a wheel without a washer. But I suppose you

really did see him," he added, dropping his bantering tone.

"Thank you, Arthur, for the confidence. I did see Myo, and as plainly as I see you now," Margaret replied earnestly.

"Then where in the world has the old curmudgeon gone?" cried Arthur in disgust.

"He may be sleeping the sleep of exhaustion in some secluded portion of the grounds," Mr. Vance suggested, "and thus no one has seen him. But, Arthur," he added reprov-
ingly, "you should speak more respectfully of Myo."

At eleven o'clock the san-tong sent to say that he was ready for the audience with Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin. Wilbur, Arthur and Stephen had already gone with O-to-ri and another young priest, for a point a mile or so away, whence, they had been assured, was obtainable the most magnificent view in Korea outside the Diamond Mountain region.

Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin at length went away, leaving Min to take care of the girls.

A spirit of restlessness took possession of Margaret. She longed to be out of doors. For one thing, the towering mountain peaks,

of which she had so far had only tantalizing glimpses, tempted her ; for another, she somehow had the feeling that she would be more successful than Wilbur and Arthur in the search for Myo.

Strange feelings had begun of late to occupy Margaret's heart with reference to Myo. There were questions she wanted to ask, yet she dreaded to approach the subject, fearing she would not do so with the wisdom and tact necessary to the success for which she hoped. Yet if she could now find Myo, kindness and persuasion might accomplish what even wisdom could not.

She looked in upon Sarah to find that she had gone off into a sound slumber. Min could be trusted, she knew. He was loyalty itself. After telling him she was going only for a walk about the grounds, and that she would not be long away, Margaret picked up her hat and started forth.

The pavilion stood in a grove of pine and chestnut trees, somewhat remote from the buildings, yet within a stone's throw of one wing of the monastery. Margaret was more than ever impressed by the massiveness of this

building. It was erected solidly of stone, and looked like a frowning fortress, although the painted carvings and gilded decorations took away somewhat from its grimness. It consisted of a main structure and two wings. She afterward learned that the central portion had been the original monastery building, and was more than a thousand years old. The wings had been added some centuries later.

Margaret crossed a portion of the grounds, not caring to go too near the monastery or the cluster of temples. The premises presented a stirring scene; monks, novices, servants and various hangers-on were passing to and fro. Carpenters were busy about the grounds and there was also the ring of hammer and anvil. She had a better view now of the nunnery, which was toward the rear of the grounds, and she also had a glimpse of a group of nuns not far away.

Margaret walked on past the bell house, where, surrounded by an entanglement of dragons of the most diabolical appearance, reposed the great bronze bell, which had sent forth its warning tones to waken the sleeping

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monks and nuns for more than five hundred years.

Just beyond the bell house a vision of indescribable beauty suddenly revealed itself to Margaret. She stepped back, startled out of composure by the awe-inspiring grandeur, the sylvan loveliness of the scene before her. She was standing not far from the edge of a gorge. Below she could hear the plunge and roar of a torrent. A great space was opened out before her, about and above which towered jagged mountain peaks. Their summits were crowned by the green glory of woods, while their sides were gleaming granite walls, along which wild flowers of every conceivable hue were hanging in rich masses of bloom, and adown which silvery cascades leaped to the valley below.

Margaret's hands were still clasped and she stood as one entranced, when a voice spoke her name. It was faint at first, but much more distinct the second time.

She turned her head quickly. There but a few paces away stood Myo. His clothing was torn and bedraggled; his face drawn and

haggard. Altogether he presented a most pitiable appearance.

Margaret stepped swiftly toward him.

"O Myo, is it really you?" she said earnestly. "How glad I am to know you were not drowned as we feared."

"It was dreadful!" he said in thin, quaking voice. "The demons were there; I saw them, O scores of them! And there was one, too, with gaunt, white hands. He tried to seize me even after I had found the safer current that I knew."

"But how did you at length escape?"

She came nearer in her earnestness. It was impossible for him not to note her interest.

"I swam to the cave. I knew it was there. Then I dragged myself along the rocks till I came to a landing."

The cave that served as an entrance to the underground stream! Then he, too, knew of it.

She was about to ask a question when he interrupted her. He bent nearer. His face grew even ghastlier. In his eyes was a hunted look, one of terror shadowed by despair.

"Tell the man who cures," he said in

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broken sentences and between little gasps for breath, " his brother—not in—sampan—when it went—down—on Han. He died—at monastery ! "

He turned even before the last sentence was finished and began to walk rapidly away.

Margaret sprang after him. She caught his hand.

" Which monastery, Myo ? " she besought.

But he gave her no answer.

Again she entreated of him the name of the monastery where Walter Griffin had died, and still he was silent.

Suddenly he pulled away from her, tottered a few steps, then fell to his knees and sat there rocking himself to and fro.

Margaret stood looking at him a moment. A sudden inspiration seized her.

" Won-su ! " she said. " Won-su ! "

He sprang up at the first utterance of the name like an animal that had received its death wound. Then with a cry that chilled her blood he dashed headlong toward the bluff. Ere she could do aught to prevent him, he went over it, plunging downward with a crash it sickened her to hear.

CHAPTER XIX

LITTLE GOLDEN RIVER

MARGARET sped swiftly for help. It was several minutes ere the searchers found Myo, owing to the precipitous nature of the bluff. He was lying upon a ledge some twenty-five or thirty feet below the spot whence he had fallen, and it did not take them long to discover that he was unconscious from the shock. No doubt he had also been severely injured internally. He moaned piteously as the hands of the stout young priests raised him. His fall had been considerably broken by the overhanging shrubbery, and by the soft bed of moss covering the ledge on which he had finally lodged ; otherwise, he must have been killed outright.

Margaret lingered until she saw him carried off to one of the apartments, where numerous beneficiaries of the monastery were lodged. She was sure the priests would do all they could for him.

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She turned away at last, her mind in a tumult. The test she had essayed had sent the arrow home to the mark. A suspicion that for the last two days had been vaguely forming in her mind had in a twinkling, as it were, come forth full fledged. She had called Myo by the name of Walter Griffin's serving man, he who had been with him on that last and fatal trip up the Han. The sudden terror with which the name had inspired Myo and his strange wild conduct immediately following had given her the answer. Yet what cause had he to act in that strange way? Mr. Walter had always written of him in the highest terms. He had picked him up on that last journey, not long after leaving Seoul, and the young artist's letters had been full of the devotion of his servant Won-su. It certainly was very queer.

At last Margaret had one link in the chain! Would she be able to fasten it to another? In all probability she would, if Myo regained consciousness.

On reaching the pavilion Margaret was thankful to find Sarah still asleep. She did not feel like talking to any one at that mo-

ment. She picked up a book that Stephen had thoughtfully brought from the sampan, but not a word could she read intelligibly. Each time she attempted it there came up before her instead the startling words Myo had spoken, "Tell the man who cures that his brother was not in the sampan when it went down in the Han. He died at the monastery!" But which monastery?

While she was still gazing at the same page on which her eyes had been riveted for the past ten minutes, the boys came in. They were enthusiastic over the magnificent view.

"It is too bad, Meg, you can't see it," said Arthur. "There is so much climbing to be done. Now, if you were only a boy——"

"I wouldn't have her one for anything," declared Stephen as he kissed her.

"Nor I," added Wilbur heartily. "She is best as she is."

"But there are so many fine things girls miss," reminded Arthur. "O it seems to me it is a dreadful cross to be a girl!" and he looked at Margaret and Sarah with the utmost commiseration.

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"Do you really think so, Arthur?" asked Margaret with a smile.

Ere Arthur could reply Stephen broke in,

"O Margaret, what do you think? There is a marble pagoda here that is almost exactly like the one in Seoul."

"It was built in imitation of it, in fact," added Arthur. "O-to-ri took us to see it. It is in a remote part of the grounds and none but the abbot, sub-abbot and priests of a certain order are allowed to enter it. Sacrifices are offered there, and all sorts of libations poured."

"The strange part is that it has no entrance from the outside," chimed in Stephen. "There is an underground passage, and you go down to the head of this passage by way of one of the corridors of the monastery. In fact, it has all sorts of mysteries connected with it, the passageway, I mean."

"Why, what a strange idea!" exclaimed Margaret.

"It is done because the pagoda is regarded as a most sacred place," said Wilbur. "The young Japanese priest, O-to-ri, told us that it was on the spot now occupied by the pagoda

that a mighty female dragon alighted nearly a thousand years ago."

"What is this about a dragon?" asked Sarah, as she entered at this moment, looking very much refreshed by her morning's nap.

She was told of the pagoda and of the legend connected with its building.

"Oh, the marble pagoda!" she exclaimed, "the place where Meg saw the man with the amber eyes who acted so queerly. Why," she broke off with a sudden little cry, "the man was Myo, to be sure! How stupid of me not to remember at once."

"I have wondered many times what it was he had concealed there," said Arthur.

"Some treasure, no doubt," replied Wilbur. "You remember Dr. Griffin told us that information given him concerning the old poleman was to the effect that he had for some time been in haste to get rich."

"That reminds me," cried Arthur suddenly. "What has become of Myo?"

"Myo is here, Arthur," Margaret answered. "I have seen him again, and a dreadful thing has happened."

Thereupon she told them of the accident to

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Myo, yet, for certain good reasons told nothing of the discovery she had made nor of Myo's communication. Before doing this she must see her father and Dr. Griffin.

"Why, poor old fellow!" exclaimed Arthur, his boyish face full of sympathy. "I'm truly sorry he has met with an accident, and I do hope it won't prove fatal. How foolish of him to go walking in that fashion toward the edge of the bluff."

While they were still talking about the accident Dr. Griffin and Mr. Vance came in, having finished the interview with the sub-abbot.

They, too, were shocked and pained to hear of Myo's terrible fall, and said they must go directly and see how he was.

Still Margaret gave no hint of what had passed between herself and Myo, since as yet she had had no opportunity to speak privately with her father and Dr. Griffin. If they were going to see Myo, she resolved that she would not say anything until their return. No doubt they would find Myo still unconscious and it would greatly harrow Dr. Griffin's feelings to know just a little, without the oppor-

tunity to learn more. Margaret was hoping with all her heart that Myo would soon recover, and that he himself would tell Dr. Griffin all, whatever the knowledge was that he possessed. One thing stood out clearly in Margaret's mind, this one, at least, devoid of the mist of perplexity. Since Myo and Won-su were one and the same, then he assuredly was with Walter Griffin during those last days.

Both Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin were loud in their praises of the san-tong, or sub-abbot. He was a refined, gentlemanly man, with most cordial manners and a benign air that sat well upon him. He had treated them royally, insisting that they partake of food with him. The lunch was really palatable, consisting of rice, bean soup, wheaten cakes, pickles, fruit, and tea. He had assured them that they were quite welcome to stay at the monastery as long as their plans detained them. He felt compelled to state, however, that the abbot was expected now at any day, and on his arrival all the affairs of the monastery passed into his hands. Of course, he, the san-tong, could not say just what course the abbot

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would pursue, but he hoped — Really now, when they came to think of it, the san-tong had not made at all clear just what he hoped. It was all very vague, in fact.

"The truth is, father," spoke Arthur quickly, "he was quite too kind-hearted, I am sure, to tell you that his hope was really a fear that we would be put out bag and baggage so soon as the chang-sop, as they call the abbot, returns."

"Why, what makes you say that, Arthur?"

"Because, sir, every one and everything about the place, man, beast, priest, scullion, even the san-tong himself, stands in fear of the abbot."

"He does indeed seem to be a very harsh and haughty person, uncle," said Wilbur, "with a rule like iron. I could see that O-to-ri himself is looking forward to the abbot's return with anything but pleasure."

"There is a certain ceremony they are going to observe," chimed in Stephen. "Some parts of it are very secret. Not even the priests themselves of O-to-ri's rank are permitted to be present at some of the rites."

"Oh, what do you think," cried Arthur suddenly, "we are to dine with the san-tong day after to-morrow! O-to-ri himself told us. I am really alarmed to think I shall not be able to handle the hashi (chop-sticks) in graceful fashion."

"Why, what an honor!" exclaimed Margaret, as she bowed low in Japanese fashion.

"Honorable sirs, we are quite overwhelmed!" declared Sarah, as she brought her forehead quite to the floor. "I fear the san-tong will never be able to survive it."

"He has asked each one of us, even to Stephen," continued Arthur, bowing in return to both Margaret and Sarah in most patronizing manner. "I know you girls are just dying with envy because you can't be included."

"Don't you see us turning fairly green from it?" bantered Margaret.

"It really is too bad!" There was deep regret now in Arthur's tones. "I told you, Meg, no longer than this very morning that there were many fine things that girls missed, poor things! because they were girls."

"How about the fine things they do have,

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of which boys, in their turn, know nothing?" asked Margaret gently.

"Oh, there is no comparison," declared Arthur. "Girls have so many restrictions. There is so much in life they can't enjoy just because they are girls. Neither can they show what is really in them, because there is so little opportunity to ——"

"Exercise their talents?" quizzed Wilbur.

"Well, pretty much that way. There is no use treating it with fun," he added warmly. "We all know that a girl's lot is in many respects a most unfortunate one."

"Poor girls! what an estimate," exclaimed Mr. Vance. He said this in a doleful voice, nevertheless, his eyes were twinkling as he looked at Dr. Griffin. "Yet," the corners of his mouth grew very sober again, "I have heard more than one wise man declare that ——"

He paused, looking at both Margaret and Sarah as though he would like to kiss each of them.

"Go on, father," urged Arthur. "What is it that wise men say?"

"Why, that one girl is worth a dozen boys in any market."

"O you are a traitor to your own sex, sir. For shame! Now what showing, I would like to know, would a girl have alongside a boy in some big undertaking, like ——"

"Climbing a mountain, for instance," suggested Wilbur.

"Oh, you know what I mean, so there is no need for chaffing. Suppose now that there was something to be done that required tact and energy and courage ——"

"And audacity," added Wilbur slyly.

"Where, I ask you, sir," finished Arthur with a flourish and ignoring Wilbur, "would a girl stand pitted against a boy?"

"A mile ahead of him!" cried Wilbur. "So shut up, now, Arthur. Considering that there are two of the injured sex in this audience, you are showing neither grace nor good sense, sir."

"I think it is horrid of you, Arthur," pouted Sarah, "to speak so ungallantly of girls."

"But I wasn't speaking ungallantly."

"Yes, you were. Everything you said was

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about girls being inferior to boys. But for Meg's tact and courage you two boys would even now be lying in a Korean prison."

"Yes, it is both ungraceful and ungrateful of him," declared Wilbur. "I advised you to shut up, Arthur, and I think you had better take the advice, from pure shame, if for no other reason."

"But you don't understand me," persisted Arthur, his face flushing. "Meg knows that I am not only appreciative but grateful." His eyes glowed with feeling now as he looked at his sister.

"He would have us dress up as soldiers and go to the war," remarked Sarah in a comic aside to Margaret. "Shocking taste, I must say."

"Come," said Wilbur suddenly, with a nod toward Margaret, "let us go to the temple. The priests are beginning their prayers, and I for one must admit my curiosity to see their mode of worship."

"But will they permit us to witness it?" asked Sarah in some surprise.

"O yes, when it is held in this outside temple, any one about the monastery is at

liberty to attend. You will see a motley array of hangers-on gathered there, the blind, the lame, the sick ; beggars of every age and condition. Besides, the nuns and novices also attend," he added reassuringly. "Let us hasten, or we may miss something we would care most to see."

Sarah, however, declared that she believed she would not go, and so, too, did Arthur and Stephen finally. They were tired out from the long tramp just taken.

The temple, in which the noon worship was being conducted, stood just in the rear of the main portion of the monastery. It was an imposing building oblong in shape, with wings and a lofty curved tiled roof, deep eaves and a mass of wood carving everywhere visible.

It was as Wilbur had predicted. A miscellaneous crowd was gathered within. Much of the floor space was occupied by kneeling forms.

Wilbur and Margaret soon found an unoccupied space beside one of the massive wooden pillars that supported the roof from the inside. Like all the rest of the temple, it was elaborately carved. Carved images were

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also lined in rows about the walls, most of them gilded or painted in rich colors.

The priests were in the midst of a chant, and smoke was rising from the brass incense burners at the altar. Numerous bells were also being tapped by means of little wooden mallets in the hands of the priests.

As soon as Margaret's eyes became used to the softened tone of the light within, she saw that she and Wilbur had taken their places beside a group of nuns. At another time Wilbur's nearness would no doubt have created something of a commotion, but as the nuns were now in the midst of their devotions, no one paid any attention to him.

Novices were also among the nuns, most of them kneeling in the rear. Directly Margaret became attracted by the face of a little novice bending in the act of devotion almost within touch of her. She was very slight and girlish, and Margaret felt sure she was no more than fifteen or sixteen years of age.

Suddenly she became aware of Margaret's gaze and their eyes met. A wild rose bloom stole into her cheeks. Involuntarily Margaret drew nearer and touched her hand. The

kindly feeling was evident, and now the soft black eyes held a smile, as once more they encountered Margaret's.

The little maid was a Japanese, Margaret was almost sure, yet the eyes were not so distinctly almond-shaped as is usual with that race. Her face was of a rich, cream tint, her lashes long, with the slightest inclination to curl, and there was so much of pleasantness and sweetness in the countenance, it really was a most winning one to look upon.

The chant grew wilder, the clang of the bells had increased to an ear-splitting din as the priests struck them with more and more frenzy. The smoke of the incense was filling the temple, stifling now in its fumes. Margaret was rejoiced when the ceremony came to an end, with a crash of bells and cymbals and the deafening roll of drums that for a moment seemed must through its terrific force lift the roof from the temple.

Margaret managed to keep close beside the little maid as they were going out. She felt the incontrollable impulse to speak to her. Poor young thing! her life would be hard enough after a while, when she was shut away

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from so many of the sweet things of life! Perhaps even now a little word kindly spoken, that showed another's interest and sympathy, would fall as the rain-drops upon parched earth.

They had reached the porch by this time and the little maid had stopped to regain her sandals.

Obeying a sudden impulse, Margaret put her arm about her.

"Tell me your name," she said in the language she was sure the little maid would know.

She turned quickly to glance into Margaret's face, her own filled with surprise and pleasure.

"They call me Kingen," she said in low, soft voice.

"Kingen!" It meant Golden River. How appropriate that maid so attractive should have a name so charming. Golden River! How soft and liquid the syllables were.

"You are not yet with the nuns?"

Margaret glanced as she spoke at the soft gray kimono, folded with such grace over the bosom of the little maid. Every part of it showed such scrupulous care.

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“No ; most honorable lady, I am as yet but a novice of the first year.”

Another question Margaret was about to ask, but at that moment her glance fell upon something that rested beneath the folds of Kingen's soft gray robe, one portion of which came up about her throat. So amazing was the sight that Margaret continued to stare at it in such a way that Wilbur, reaching her side at that moment, through the crowd that had temporarily separated them, gazed at her in alarm.

“Are you sick, Margaret?” he asked.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE HALL OF THE FOUR SAGES

WILBUR'S words brought Margaret to her senses. She turned quickly to answer him.

"No; I am not sick. Do not think that." Then she leaned toward him, adding in lower tones, "Wilbur, there is a little maid here to whom I wish especially to speak. I will tell you all about it afterward. As she will no doubt be very shy if you remain, and be tongue-tied in consequence, I would like so the opportunity of seeing her alone for a little while."

"Why, certainly, Margaret," was the quick and pleasant reply. "I will wait for you at the gateway."

Most of the worshipers had now regained their sandals and passed from the porch. Many paused to glance curiously at Margaret. Nearly all of them had heard of the presence of the foreigners at the monastery and some of them had already seen her. Their

curiosity, however, had not been sated, so they must needs stare at her again full-eyed as they passed by her.

So soon as Wilbur had moved away Margaret said to the little maid, Golden River,

"Please let me speak to you a little while where no one else can hear. There is something I wish very much to ask you."

Kingen looked at her in surprise.

What could this pretty foreign girl have to say to her that really was of importance? It seemed hard to believe that it could be important. Yet there was such an earnest look now in Margaret's eyes, and her manner said so plainly that Kingen would oblige her greatly by yielding, that the little maid could no longer demur. Besides, had not this sweet young girl been extremely friendly to her? Kingen could feel now the soft, warm touch of Margaret's hand as it lay upon hers for a moment in the temple.

"Where can we go that no one will hear us?" asked Margaret.

"In the grove at the side of the temple," said Kingen. "No one is there now, I think."

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They found a secluded spot at the foot of a large oak. Margaret sat down upon a projecting root and drew Kingen beside her. For a moment or so timid little Golden River seemed quite shy in this nearness to the young foreigner whose fair face and glossy hair had rendered her almost breathless with admiration. But Margaret managed so tactfully that soon the little maid was at ease.

Suddenly Margaret leaned toward Kingen, and, touching a sheeny silken scarf that lay tucked between the demure folds of the gray kimono, said,

“Tell me, dear little Golden River, where is he who gave you this?”

It was almost as bold a stroke as she had used with Myo, though extreme gentleness and kindness were in the voice in which she now spoke to Kingen. The tones were clear and soft, yet Margaret's heart was in a tumult, for the scarf resting between the folds of the little Japanese maid's kimono was one Margaret had often seen Walter Griffin wear. A friend had brought it to him from France, and Margaret herself had worked the initials, one of which was now showing plainly.

“Do you mean the noble lord who was a great artist, whose pictures said words to you when you looked at them?” asked the little maid sadly.

“Yes,” replied Margaret eagerly, “it is he I mean.”

She was rejoiced to have arrived so speedily at the heart of the matter.

“He is dead,” said Kingen, and now a mist came into her eyes and her lips trembled. “The river swallowed him up. O, it was dreadful!”

The little maid hid her face in the sleeve of her kimono and a sob shook her frame.

“Can this really be true, Kingen? Are you sure he was drowned in the river? May you not be mistaken?”

Perplexity suddenly shadowed Margaret’s joy. How was she to reconcile this statement with that of Myo, that Walter Griffin had died at a monastery?

“Oh, no; O no,” replied Kingen; “I am not mistaken. With my own eyes I saw him go away. He was very gay. They said he had been very fortunate in digging treasure out of the great hill, Nippoo-san, and that he

was going back to his friends in Seoul, and to one he loved better than all others, to share with them his good fortune. He smiled and swung his cap to me, and cried out that I must not forget him, that even if I had the mind to do it, the scarf would not let me. He had given it to me only the day before. He was pleased to think I had done him some service in cooking him the things he liked on the brazier, as my mother taught me. He knew I admired the scarf, for I had told him how beautiful it was.

"I was only a little maid then," continued Golden River, raising her face, on the cheeks of which the tears still sparkled, "not more than twelve. I am fifteen now."

All the while Kingen was speaking, Margaret's heart had been beating tumultuously. Yes, truly here was another link in the chain! and in what an astonishing manner she had been enabled to find it. The little maid spoke too positively for her to doubt. Walter Griffin had been here, at this very monastery! Golden River had seen him and talked with him; more than this, she had served him so faithfully he had been led to give her the

scarf, which Margaret knew he valued highly. But was it this monastery? Kingen had not said so definitely, though to Margaret it seemed plainly to be inferred. The little maid, however, soon set her fully at rest on this subject.

The man with the wonderful pictures in his head had really been here, at Chang-an-sa. He had remained two weeks or more, as well as the little maid could remember. It was not the first time, however, that he had been here. He had painted many beautiful things, one for her especially, which she would show the kind foreign lady if she desired it.

"Yes, Kingen, I should like much to see it," said Margaret softly. "If you do not mind, I will come soon to your apartment, so that you can show it to me."

Kingen said that she did not mind, neither would the other novices who lodged with her. The nuns were not so very strict with them as yet. She really would be pleased to have her honorable friend make her a visit.

Then Kingen went on to tell Margaret that the young man with the pictures in his head, who, she was sure, must be a lord in his own land, so noble was his air, had painted a pic-

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ture of the chang-sop. It hung in the Hall of the Four Sages within the monastery, and was truly very wonderful, so all who saw it declared. So perfect was the picture, the abbot seemed about to speak.

"Are foreigners allowed to visit this hall, Kingen?" asked Margaret suddenly.

"I do not know," replied the little maid looking puzzled. "They used to be allowed to enter it, but not now, since the picture has been placed there, I have been told."

"Perhaps no foreigners have been here since that time, until we came," suggested Margaret.

"Yes, I am sure there have been two or three," replied Kingen slowly, "for I saw them myself. The chang-sop ——"

Here Kingen paused, and, looking about her quite nervously, lowered her voice as she continued,

"The chang-sop does not wish foreigners to come. He does not like them, and says they come only to spy. He sent away the young lord who painted his picture and almost as soon as the picture was finished."

"What made him do that, Kingen?"

Margaret was surprised at the sudden nerv-

ousness with which she awaited the little maid's reply.

"I do not know, honorable lady, but I think it was because of something the young lord did which the chang-sop did not like. He is very quick tempered and haughty," added Golden River, looking about her again apprehensively, "not at all like the san-tong, whom every one loves."

A sudden inspiration seized Margaret.

"O do you think, little friend, Golden River, that the san-tong would show us the Hall of the Four Sages and the picture which the young lord, as you call him, painted?"

Kingin's face brightened suddenly.

"I think, honorable friend, that he would. You can but ask him. He is very kind, and I believe will not refuse you."

Golden River's face as she turned it toward Margaret said plainly, though her words did not, "How could any one refuse you?"

"Can I find the san-tong easily?" asked Margaret. "Where is his apartment? I mean the public one, where visitors are received."

"It is down a passageway, honorable lady, that leads from the great main hall, about

midway on the left, as you enter from the rear. It is the third or fourth door down the passageway, I have forgotten just which, but there is a shrine of Gautama near the portal, you can hardly miss it."

"Thank you, Kingen," said Margaret earnestly as she rose to go, and, drawing the little maid toward her, kissed her heartily. "You have been very good and sweet to answer my questions so freely. Let me tell you now that he about whom I have asked you was a dear friend of mine, and in our home in Seoul lives the one who was dearer to him than all others. It is for her sake most of all that I have asked you the questions."

"Oh!" cried Kingen. "Oh!" and the soft eyes grew dewy with tears. "And he never came home again?" she asked wistfully, as though there might have been after all some miracle wrought whereby he had been saved from a watery grave.

"He never came home again," replied Margaret, shaking her head sadly, and now her eyes were as misty as Kingen's own.

As they walked slowly back toward the front of the temple, Margaret said to Kingen,

"I shall come soon to see the wonderful picture, little Golden River, you may rest assured, and there is much more I want to ask you of him who was the friend of both."

Wilbur was just without the gateway awaiting Margaret. As she spied him, Golden River tucked her head down and passed demurely by.

Wilbur smiled amusedly, then he turned to ask of Margaret,

"Did you find the little maid as interesting as you hoped, cousin?"

"Even more so," she replied earnestly. But she was not ready to tell Wilbur, or any other of the younger members of the party, the story of the startling developments of the last few hours. One false step now might frustrate the best laid plans. So she went on,

"I am anxious to learn all I can about this particular monastery, and I thought the little nun might tell me some things. She's a dear little thing."

If he read beneath her assumed gayety anything deeper than the object she had admitted, he gave no sign.

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Something of a shock awaited Margaret on reaching the pavilion. She was burning with the desire to unburden her heart to her father and Dr. Griffin ; she must tell them all now just as soon as she could do so privately. What was her consternation, then, to learn that they had departed nearly an hour ago for the village four miles or so up the river and on the other side ! The arrangements had been made hurriedly, they having given themselves barely time to partake of the noonday meal ere departing. Kang had come for them, appearing shortly after Wilbur and Margaret had started for the temple. There was some business, he declared, that needed the immediate attention of his employers. An opportunity had presented itself to secure the very sampan they needed, at an astonishingly low price, if they acted at once. But they must perfect the arrangements in person, as the owner refused to treat with an agent. He was, moreover, in a great hurry, asserting that he must leave the village at daylight on the morrow, if the bargain had not been struck in the meantime.

Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin had lingered

only long enough to partake of a hurried meal and to make some arrangements that would be a little pleasanter for Margaret and Sarah. Two of the nuns were to lodge in the apartment next that of the girls during the nights Mr. Vance and Dr. Griffin were away. As the day after the morrow would be the Sabbath, Mr. Vance had left a message for Margaret to the effect that he and Dr. Griffin would in all probability remain for religious services in the village.

Arthur and Stephen had accompanied them as far as the river. They had expressed the desire to go all the way to the ferry, where, Kang had said, a flatboat was waiting to take them across, but Mr. Vance had declared they must not think of such a thing. He wanted the boys to be back at the monastery before sunset, for they must remember that to them and Wilbur was assigned the important post of taking care of the girls.

Margaret's mind was in a state of chaos. What was best to do? She had not realized fully until that moment just how much she had depended upon unburdening herself to her father and Dr. Griffin. Of course, they

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must know all, and at once, she had decided.

But now her desire could not be put into effect. Her father and Dr. Griffin had gone away, and would probably be absent until the noon of Monday. In the meantime, what should she do? As that question came, her first thought was of Myo. There was still the perplexity that presented itself through his statement, which directly conflicted with that of Kingen. Perhaps Myo had recovered consciousness. But this hope was soon dispelled; for, on making enquiry of Sarah, she learned that her father and Dr. Griffin on returning from the visit to Myo, had stated that he was still the same. Dr. Griffin had made an examination and expressed very little hope of his recovery.

A daring resolution took possession of Margaret. She had asked Kingen about the san-tong and the possibility of his granting her permission to visit the Hall of the Four Sages to see the wonderful picture Walter Griffin had made of the chang-sop. All the time, however, she was far more desirous of seeing the san-tong to ask him questions than she

was to seek permission for a view of the picture. The san-tong was kind, he was gentlemanly, he was considerate; this much and more her father and Dr. Griffin had said of him. The little maid, too, had been earnest in her praise. Surely she had naught to fear from the san-tong, but much to gain.

She looked at Wilbur, who had walked some steps away to speak to Min. Should she tell him all and ask him to attend her on the visit to the san-tong? A spirit of sturdy independence suddenly seized Margaret. She had gone thus far unaided, why not go further still? How astonished they would all be when they learned the extent of her discoveries!

Margaret's thoughts went also to Sarah. She would have liked Sarah to accompany her, but when she recalled how easy she was to take alarm, she quickly gave up the desire. There was really no impropriety in Margaret's visiting the san-tong. All ages and conditions of humanity sought his public apartment in the absence of the chang-sop. It was a kind of court room, where he listened to all sorts of pléas, passed sentences—of the

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mildest sort, as was asserted,—granted pardon, bestowed alms, and settled matters of business pertaining to the daily routine of the monastery.

Margaret's ardent hope was that she would find the san-tong alone. She noticed as she passed onward toward the main hall that the yards and courtways were nearly deserted. There were only a few workmen and servants about. Two or three priests passed her in their white gowns, with metal gongs attached to their girdles.

The hallway was entirely deserted. It was the hour of the evening prayers in the cells, but Margaret did not know it. The bell had rung before she left the pavilion, but so filled was her mind with what she was about to do, that the significance of its ringing had not suggested itself to her.

She was sure she was closely following the directions Kingen had given her. She had turned to the left now and was passing down a narrower corridor. Here were the doors, as the little maid had said. She counted them, one, two, three, four. Kingen had not been sure as to whether it were the third door or

the fourth one. But where was the shrine? She could see nothing of it. The light was not strong in the hall, but if there had been anything at hand of the bulk she felt sure the shrine was, she would have seen it. Kingen had not known, when telling her of this shrine, that it had recently been taken away for repairs.

Margaret knocked upon the panel of both the third and fourth doors, timidly at first, then louder and louder as she met with no response. Then she tried each door, but each alike resisted all her effort to open it.

Suddenly an object by the side of a door at the end of the hall attracted her attention. She could just make it out in the somewhat uncertain light. She walked swiftly to it. It must be the shrine to which Kingen alluded. There was an ebony stool in front of it, and on the shrine below the images, brass incense burners, candles in burnished candlesticks ready to be lighted, and a great porcelain bowl heaped high with fruit. This must indeed be the shrine of Gautama. No doubt the santong had changed his apartment without the little maid's knowing of it.

Leaning forward Margaret placed her hand upon the door and pushed against it. She did not note that it was much larger than any other in its vicinity and very elaborately carved.

The door yielded at last to her pressure. It turned back easily, noiselessly, as though some hand from within were assisting her. As it swung back revealing the interior, Margaret gasped in her surprise. She was standing at the threshold of a long and lofty apartment, the roof of which was supported by pillars of a marble-like whiteness beautifully gilded in a network of vines and sprays of flowers. The walls, too, were adorned with the same beautiful tracery of gold and white, with numerous carved images painted and gilded, and pictures embroidered in gold upon silk. At one end there was a magnificent canopy, above and about which hung rich silken draperies of so sheeny a texture they seemed melting away as the afternoon sunlight fell upon them through the openings for light and air. Under this canopy sat four immense bronze figures, each in a different attitude of meditation.

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“The Hall of the Four Sages!” exclaimed Margaret, her voice quivering with excitement. “To think that, without really intending it, I have really come here!”

Then, scarcely conscious of what she did, she stepped within and let the door swing back again behind her. It closed as noiselessly as it had opened.

CHAPTER XXI

THE JUDGMENT OF THE BUDDHA

SLOWLY and with bated breath Margaret advanced within the apartment, at every step becoming more and more assured that this was indeed the Hall of the Four Sages mentioned by Kingen.

“Where is the picture of the abbot, painted by Walter Griffin?” This was the thought now uppermost in her mind.

And then, and when least expecting it, she came upon the picture. It was above an alcove in the wall, to the right of the silk-draped canopy beneath which sat, or half reclined, the four pensive-looking Buddhas.

The picture was well placed. Though the sun was near to its setting, and there were but a few rays that slanted through the apertures set high in the outer walls of the apartment, still the light fell upon the picture and she could see it plainly.

It was a finely executed piece of work, and the abbot did indeed look, as Kingen had

said, as though about to speak, yet Margaret turned away from the picture with a shudder. Not even the beautiful silken robes of office, the golden girdle and other adornments with which the abbot had arrayed himself, could soften the cold, hard features, suggestive of both haughtiness and cruel will.

Margaret walked about the hall for some moments, her interest growing deeper. How she wished the others, especially Sarah, could have seen the exquisite carvings. Margaret could hear now the exclamations of astonishment and incredulity with which they would receive the story of her unintentional visit to the Hall of the Four Sages!

The deep booming of the great bronze bell suddenly brought Margaret to a realization of her strange position. She wondered at herself for not having before realized it. Her coolness in walking about the hall and so leisurely examining things was truly astonishing. Suppose the priests found her here, what would they say and do?

She started quickly toward the door by which she had entered. Could she hope to be as fortunate in avoiding notice as she re-

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turned through the passageways of the main building as she had been when she came? She feared not. Yet if she could only find the san-tong, all would be well, she believed.

She tried the door, but could not open it, for it seemed to have caught hard and fast. Perhaps it was only stuck. For the first time she noted how massive looking it was. How had she ever opened it? But then it seemed to yield easily to her pressure, almost as though some one had assisted her in opening it.

There was a large bronze handle to the door. She caught hold of this and tugged with all her might; still there was no yielding of the door.

"It is no use!" cried Margaret at last in despair. "I cannot open it. There is a spring, no doubt, and it is caught. I must find some other way to get out."

From the shape of the hall, she was sure she was now in one of the new wings of the building, the passages through which she had come being in the old or main portion. No doubt she could find her way out by other

passageways which led to an entrance in the outer wall of the wing.

She crossed the hall again, seeking for a door along the opposite wall. She was startled now to see how dim the light had become. The sun no doubt had dipped suddenly behind a mountain peak. Margaret had to walk cautiously to keep from stumbling against the different shrines, images, and other objects set here and there about the floor. She reached the opposite wall and began groping along it, seeking a door. After some moments her search was rewarded. There was a recess in the wall, before which hung draperies of rich brocade. Pushing them aside she entered the alcove to find at its back a small door almost as elaborately carved as was the great main door. It was ajar, and through it came a beam of light.

An exclamation of thankfulness escaped Margaret, and she was about to push the door open, so that she could pass through, when a sudden feeling of hesitancy stayed her. What would she find on the other side? Might not the priests be there at their devo-

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tions? The light so indicated. She bent forward, listening intently. There was no sound. If persons were there, she surely would catch some sound. Yet the priests might be at silent prayer. If this were so, could she not slip through the apartment unnoticed?

With this hope strongly defined, Margaret carefully pushed open the door and entered. She had no more than done so, however, when she stood spellbound with horror. And no wonder! for the scene upon which she looked was amply sufficient to strike upon a young girl's nerves with terror.

The apartment was only about half the size of that through which she had just passed, yet in its suggestions of horror it seemed interminable. Everything that could produce an impression of gloom, that could awaken terror by dumb representations, was there. It was the Temple of the Judges, though Margaret did not then know it, and here was held, at two or three times of the year, certain mysterious rites called "The Judgment of the Buddha." In reality the judgment was by the high ecclesiastical dignitary of the monastery, the abbot.

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The ceilings and walls of this forbidding looking apartment were of wood blackened to a midnight hue, and so highly polished that it shone like mirrors. At one end of it there was a canopy, as in the Hall of the Four Sages. On a platform beneath sat an immense bronze Buddha, and grouped about it other bronze images, representing associate judges, all of them disciples of the Buddha who had made themselves famous through various ages.

In front of the Buddha was an altar, and surrounding all a railing of brass. Along the altar and on various brackets and pedestals were lighted candles in massive holders of ebony.

Only the Buddha had a merciful look upon his face. The images of the associate judges had been made to look as horrible as possible. At the back of each judge were pictures depicting the most awful tortures of those who disobeyed the teachings of Buddhism. All along the walls of the hall and against the pillars that supported the roof were placed innumerable images of gods and demons, with hideous, grinning faces and leering eyes. The central

figure of the hall was an immense dragon, showing a frightful countenance, as though just cheated of his prey.

Bravely trying to conquer the feeling of repulsion and terror that had seized her at sight of this horrible Judgment Hall, Margaret advanced a few paces within the room and glanced about her carefully. To all appearance the hall was deserted, though the numerous lighted candles gave evidence of some form of devotions soon to begin.

With her heart beating rapidly, and her knees trembling, Margaret crossed the hall to the wall on the opposite side. Carefully she searched along the entire length, but without avail. There was no outlet of any kind, so far as she had been able to discover. All this while her hearing had been strained to catch any sound of approaching steps.

She now resolved to try the wall that lay at an angle to this one, that at the rear of the hall. She had covered about half the distance toward it, when a noise in the direction of the altar caused her to turn her head. Three priests were there at their devotions. So noiselessly had they approached in their bare feet

that Margaret had not noticed them. Even as she gazed, four others appeared, then a moment or so later there came in view a procession the sight of which caused Margaret to step quickly behind the cover of a pillar. It was the abbot, with the sub-abbot and the monks of a higher rank, she was sure. As they approached the altar, the great bell without boomed again with deep, hoarse notes. It had barely ceased when a wild chant burst from the lips of those about the altar.

While this was still in progress, Margaret dared to look again. This time it was cautiously, and from behind the friendly shelter of the pillar. The abbot had taken his place on the platform beside the Buddha. Two priests had approached the brass incense burners on the altar; others were crouched about the gilded railing on hands and knees, their foreheads touching the floor. Margaret was astonished to see so many. How had such a large number entered with so little noise? Judging from the direction whence the procession had come, the priests had evidently entered by a door just to the left of the canopy. Why had not Margaret been able to find it?

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Should she seek it now? She had made the movement to do this when a thought restrained her. It would be very bad breeding to disturb the priests at their devotions, as she would no doubt do if she passed so near to them. It was heathen worship, it was true, but she would respect it. The only graceful thing, it seemed to her, she could now do, was to wait until the devotions were over. Then she would follow by the way she saw the priests go out.

It never occurred to Margaret that she could be witnessing anything forbidden to her and to all others save those who took part in it. Outsiders were welcomed to the services in the temple, then why not here?

Margaret soon had an answer to her last question in the startling nature of the rites on which she looked. The chants grew more weird and wild; Sanscrit litanies were intoned by voices that rose higher and shriller, till they reached a climax of discordant, blood-chilling sounds. Priests, acting as though they were going mad, circled round and round three bronze bells, set upon low pedestals, which they struck with mallets of metal. In the midst

of the frenzy a number of the candles were extinguished, then almost as suddenly every sound ceased.

The abbot rose. The flame from the candles, burning in a circle about him, shone upon his shaven head and haughty face. He extended his hand and spoke burning words of denunciation. Then one by one priests approached with bowed heads and most humble mien. They had removed their vestments and were clothed now only in short, sleeveless tunics. Books were in their hands, which were extended to the abbot, books in which all the sins, both of thought and of act, during the past months, were recorded.

The abbot took them and read such parts as he thought would cover the culprits with the greater shame and confusion. Scathing comments followed the readings. It was a general confession of all misdeeds of the flesh, of all weaknesses of the spirit, in which every one took part, even the abbot himself getting down upon hands and knees and confessing all to Buddha; in low tones, however, which no one heard.

Suddenly the light of the extinguished can-

dles flared up again and the smoke of burning incense began to pervade the apartment. The judge now read the sentences, each culprit listening with bowed head to the form of punishment meted out to him.

Suddenly the chanting broke forth again, the wild clashing of bells, the shrieking of prayers, the frenzied whirl of figures clawing with sharp finger nails into the flesh of breast and shoulders, until the blood trickled down streaking with red the snow-white tunics. Over all, mingling with the smoke of the incense, a deep red light began to steal, growing more and more vivid as the outburst of sound grew louder and louder, till the mingled voices became almost an uproar. Then as suddenly as before the din ceased. The priests stood motionless, their faces upturned to the light. In the fierce, mysterious glow the countenances of the judges looked more diabolical than ever.

All this while Margaret had stood without the power of movement. She was like one under the force of a spell. The horrible rites she had witnessed had struck her numb with terror. Two or three times she had felt that

she must cry out and rush from the room, but each time she felt incapable of voice or of motion. Her brain was in a whirl, yet there was one thing quite clear to her ; she had witnessed what she ought never to have seen. This thought kept her silent and trembling even after the orgies had ceased and the spell of numbness to a considerable degree had been broken.

“What am I to do?” Margaret asked herself in dismay. “Oh, why did I not try to escape at the beginning of the ceremonies, while the light was dim? But for the shadow of the pillar and that of the great image beside it, I would long ago have been discovered, I am sure.”

The priests were still standing about the altar, their faces upturned. The red glow was fading. No doubt it was for this they were waiting.

In desperation Margaret suddenly moved away from the pillar. Her nerves were on a tension. If she were ever going to escape, now was the one remaining opportunity, while the priests were in that attitude of rapt devotion. There was now but a dim light through

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certain portions of the hall. Perhaps by keeping close within the shadows cast by the rows of images she might reach the door unseen.

Two-thirds of the distance had been traversed, and Margaret was just congratulating herself that, with a little more caution and a little more nerve, she would soon be beyond the range of eyes, when her foot caught in the outstretched claws of a dragon, and she stumbled. In her effort to recover herself, she clutched at a near-by shrine. Her fingers struck a porcelain bowl, carelessly set close to the edge. Down it fell with a crash.

Instantly every head bowed in devotion about the altar was raised. There were sharp exclamations, cries of alarm and anger. Then two forms, darting out from among the others, quickly sped toward the spot where Margaret was now righting herself.

In another moment rough hands had seized her and were dragging her toward the altar.

The monks crowded around, some open-mouthed and open-eyed with wonder, others again, and by far the larger number, staring at her with scowling, threatening counte-

nances. In all the throng she caught sight of but one pitying face. It was that of the san-tong, she was sure. Then she saw the abbot approach. He pushed others aside that he might have a better view of her.

"The second time the offense has occurred," he said, turning a scowling face toward the sang-tong, "and each time it has been by the same breed! Strange that the daring presumption should be shared by men and women alike."

CHAPTER XXII

THE CELL OF YO-DO-KI

MARGARET held her head up proudly ; yet there mingled with this pride the feeling that she had committed a grievous wrong, though unwittingly. She had witnessed certain mystic rites forbidden to the eyes of all aliens, and even to some of the priests themselves. It was a grave offense, she knew, and as calmly as she could she awaited their verdict. Two things kept the bells of hope ringing within her heart. For one she knew that the religion of the Buddhists forbade the taking of life. For the other, if they imprisoned her, they could not long keep her so, as her loved ones would be sure to raise a great hue and cry so soon as they discovered that she was confined within the monastery. What troubled her now, more than aught else, was the scowling, threatening looks the monks cast upon her.

The abbot continued to talk in harsh, angry

tones. He was greatly excited. His eyes flashed, and there were cruel lines about his mouth. He was speaking now to the san-tong, and it was a fierce denunciation of herself, Margaret knew.

The soft, pleading tones of the san-tong interrupted him.

"Spare her," Margaret heard him say. "She is very young. No doubt this has been innocently done."

The abbot, however, was beyond the calming influence of reasoning.

"How dare you suggest aught like that?" he asked, as he turned fiercely upon the san-tong. "Know you not as well as I know it, that alien eyes looking upon rites like these, must never again see the light of day? Young or old, let them suffer alike. Man or woman, it is all the same; never must they be allowed to return where mischief can be wrought through their babbling. It is not permitted, even by the good and merciful Buddha, that heretic, gaining knowledge, innocently or otherwise, of the sacred observances, prescribed by the wisdom of the ages, be given opportunity to reveal them with scoffing tongue."

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Turning to the other priests the chang-sop now delivered himself of a wild harangue, a part of which Margaret understood, the other part being almost unintelligible. In it, however, Margaret caught a denunciation of herself, of her people, of her whole race, in fact, of one in particular who had wrought untold mischief through his meddling. The abbot denounced every one of the "hated breed" as a spy and a meddler, banded together for the purpose of bringing shame and confusion upon the noble teachings of the great and most holy Buddha.

Again and again the sub-abbot sought to stay this flood of savage denunciation. He plead, he reasoned, he offered excuses for those so bitterly upbraided, but all in vain. The abbot was inexorable. No earthly power could have stayed the torrent of words upon his lips. He was deaf even to the plea that Margaret be permitted to speak words in her own behalf. The san-tong was sure she had not come into the hall intentionally. Margaret could never forget the gentle, benign look upon the sub-abbot's face as he made this plea in her behalf, which the abbot treated

as he had treated all the others, disdainfully. There was also a pitying light in the san-tong's eyes as he turned them upon Margaret, which stirred her to the very depths of her heart. It was as though he had said, "My child, I have done all I can for you, but you see how vain are my pleadings."

Margaret assayed now for the first time to speak. She would tell her story, even if it did no good. The san-tong, at least, should know that his confidence was not misplaced. But she had uttered no more than a half dozen sentences, when the abbot peremptorily bade her be silent. She had committed the offense; whether innocently or otherwise did not matter. She must suffer the penalty. There was no appeal for any one from the judgment of Buddha, and he looked significantly around upon the great bronze figure sitting in front of the altar.

The priests had now resumed their robes, thus concealing the blood-stained tunics and the lacerations they had given themselves upon breasts and shoulders. In the case of some who, in their religious frenzy, had made deeper wounds than others, the blood, still

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trickling, began to soak through to the outside garment.

The abbot turned again toward the great silent bronze figure. He picked up the smoking censer, and while he swung it round and round in a slow circle, he began an incantation. Instantly every head save Margaret's was bowed, and every lip took up the refrain.

"Namu, Amida, Butsu! (Hail, omnipotent Buddha!)"

A shivering seized Margaret. For the first time she began to have something of a true conception of what might await her. How cruel and determined, too, were the faces of these priests! Would it, after all, be an easy matter for her loved ones to release her? Even the king, she had heard, showed a weakness when it came to antagonizing the Buddhists to any serious extent.

The chant ceased. The heads of the priests were raised. Suddenly the abbot turned and looked grimly at Margaret. She felt her face paling under the glance of those cruel eyes. Her heart sank like lead. A chill as from an icy blast passed over her. The only warmth

her body seemed to possess was where the two spots of crimson flamed upon her cheeks.

The abbot continued to gaze at her piercingly for a few moments, then he spoke,

"Know that for this terrible sacrilege you have been guilty of committing against the most sacred Buddha, never again shall your eyes look upon the light of day, nor your lips have opportunity to speak aught of that which your eyes have here beheld."

Then he signaled to two of the priests and continued,

"Take her and bear her away to the cell just immediately within the east wing, to the right of the passage; the one where the monk Yo-do-ki was not long ago confined. Take care that you proceed entirely by the secret stairs and underground passages. Furthermore," the eyes of the abbot blazed now as his glance swept the upturned faces, "no lip is to speak one word of what has occurred here this night, under penalty of the direst punishment known to Buddha. The girl is dead to her friends. Remember!"

The abbot turned away as though he had now entirely washed his hands of the affair,

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except that they knew he would be as relentless as death in meting out the punishment threatened to those who held not their tongues.

As the priests designated to bear her away to imprisonment moved toward Margaret, the young girl's fortitude for the first time entirely deserted her. A realization of the terrible thing about to happen swept over her as an engulfing wave. The room and its occupants swam before her eyes. She swayed and would have fallen but for a steadying hand. It was the san-tong's, she discovered after a moment. She saw, too, the san-tong's face. There was gentleness, pity, compassion there; perhaps, also, there was hope. Her heart stirred quickly; her hands were extended to him. She would plead with him to try again to turn the iron will of the abbot. She would promise them upon honor never to let one word of aught that she had seen pass her lips. Surely, they would believe that she would keep her word.

Ere she could more than begin to speak to the san-tong, however, she was suddenly seized and forced away from him. All that followed

was like a terrible nightmare to Margaret. Not until the great door of the cell clanged behind the retreating monks did she come fully to herself, and then with a shock as she realized her surroundings. She was indeed imprisoned, in a Buddhist monastery, and in a cell many feet under ground, she now realized, as she recalled, though still in a somewhat dazed manner, the many steps they had descended.

The priests had left her a light burning within a paper lantern. By its dim rays she was enabled to see the dimensions of her cell, and was thankful to find it was not very large. A vast apartment with mocking shadows and infested perhaps with rats and other small creatures would have been a greater trial upon her nerves. She shuddered, too, as she thought of the possible filthy condition of her quarters. But this she need not have feared had she stopped to think of the proverbial cleanliness of Buddhist premises. The cell in fact had recently received a coat of white-wash. The brick floor had also been carefully swept and the straw mats and other bedding were fresh and clean. In addition to the

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light, the monks had left wheaten cakes, honey, fruit and fresh water.

"They are evidently determined I shall not die soon," Margaret said to herself with a faint smile.

She sat down upon the straw matting and went carefully over the whole situation. It did not seem to her that it would be possible for the priests to conceal the fact of her imprisonment. Once it became known to her loved ones and friends, which must be very soon, Margaret felt assured they would leave no stone unturned to effect her release. No doubt Wilbur and Arthur and Stephen, and even Sarah, were hunting for her at this very moment, alarmed by her protracted absence. The priests might withstand their questions, and no doubt would, as well as succeed in blocking their efforts toward investigation, but when her father and Dr. Griffin returned, all would be changed. If the priests were obdurate, the law would be invoked. Both her father and the young physician, she knew, had won the good will of the king. If no other way could be found, the king would issue an order for her release.

Alas, poor Margaret! she little knew how wily these priests could be; how, in truth, the report of her death had already been circulated. In proof of it were shown her sailor hat and reefer, about the detention of which by the priests, Margaret was even now vaguely wondering. Why had they not returned them to her, especially when she had insisted on having them? The jacket she had removed on entering the Hall of the Four Sages, on account of the closeness of the apartment, and the hat had fallen from her head as the priests dragged her toward the altar.

It was fortunate for Margaret that she did not know of all that had happened within the three-quarters of an hour since she had been dragged from the Hall of Judgment to the cell of Yo-do-ki.

Margaret's absence had long ago been noted by the young people at the pavilion, and even as she stood beside the pillar gazing upon the first of the rites, Wilbur and Arthur were making anxious search for her. All the information they could gain for a time was to the effect that she had been seen going toward the promontory overlooking the foaming

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waters of the tributary of the Han near which the nunnery was situated. How wretched indeed Margaret would have been could she have known that at the very moment she was taking the most hopeful view yet of her probable release, Sarah was weeping heart-brokenly, and Wilbur and Arthur and Stephen were overcome with grief because of the story told to them that Margaret had fallen over the ledge into the foaming waters, which had swept her body on into the Han. The sailor hat and reefer were shown them, which the monks declared she had laid aside upon the ledge ere leaning over for the flowers, the effect to grasp which had caused her death.

Having taken the cheerful view of the situation that her release would surely come shortly, Margaret made up her mind to endure her imprisonment with the best grace possible. She now realized that she was hungry, and reaching over, took some of the fruit, then one of the wheaten cakes.

Margaret carefully wound her watch. She must not now let it run down, or she would lose track of time. Then she laid down upon

the matting and tried to sleep. It was a long time ere her eyes closed in slumber. Visions of the terrible scenes through which she had so recently passed kept presenting themselves in so vivid a manner that, even when she fell into a doze, it was to awaken very soon thereafter with a start and a gasping cry of terror. Toward morning, however, she fell into a sound slumber, the slumber of thorough exhaustion, and did not awake until, as her watch showed her, it was near noon of the following day.

Margaret sat up quickly and gazed about her in a dazed way. It took her some moments to return to a full realization of her surroundings. She arose and walked about her cell. The lantern was still burning; the little earthen lamp within it had been well supplied with oil. From words she had heard the abbot speak and from others dropped by the monks as they bore her to imprisonment, she had a general idea as to the position of her cell. It was far below ground, of that she was assured, and was just within the newer portion of the monastery known as the east wing. In fact, the wall of

her cell at one side was the extreme wall of the old building, against which the newer structure had been erected. Margaret picked up the lantern, examining this wall more closely. It showed evidences of its great age. At more than one place the mortar was crumbling. A sudden wild hope filled Margaret's heart. Suppose that she could find some implement whereby the mortar could be removed and one or more of the stones displaced? Might she not then hope to escape from her cell? She had her pocket knife, a rather substantial one for a girl; would not that do?

Almost with the coming of the hope, despair followed. No; the knife would not do. The blade would be broken ere half the thick crust of mortar was penetrated. And even if, by something little short of a miracle, the stones were removed, would not the opening but lead her into another cell?

She was about to set the lantern down again, when a stone image projecting from the wall no more than three feet above the floor of the cell caught her attention. She remembered now certain words spoken by the priests as they departed, heard then as in a dream, but

returning now more clearly at sight of the image.

"What mockery to put her in the cell with Kwan-yin, the Most Merciful, when there is to be no mercy for her!"

This then was the image of Kwan-yin, the Buddhist God of Mercy! The benign face of the image was a relief, at least, after the horrible, leering countenances of those in the Hall of Judgment.

Raising the lantern still higher, Margaret had a still closer survey of the image. There was a recess in the wall at this place. It looked as though it might at some time have been an opening that led from one cell to another. The image was set partly back within the recess. There was a shelf before it and the imprisoned monk, Yo-do-ki, had evidently used it as a shrine, as there were traces of burned candles.

Suddenly Margaret heard approaching footsteps. She set the lantern down quickly and turned facing the door, her heart beating expectantly. Could it be that even now release was near? Her heart sank again as the door opened admitting only two of the priests.

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They had come to bring her more food and fresh water. They also added candles this time to her store. For one brief instant the mad thought seized Margaret that if she were only quick enough she might slip past the priests and dart through the unlocked door. Once without, might she not hope to elude them in the darkened passageways, and in time make her escape to the apartments above, where surely some means would be found to quit the monastery in safety? One of the priests, however, as though he had read her intention, stepped toward the door and stood with his back against it until his companion was through. All this while he regarded Margaret with a grim smile.

The day wore on. It was night again. Once more Margaret tried to sleep, but slumbered only fitfully till again near daybreak, when the sleep of exhaustion came, and this time she did not awaken till past noon. This was Sunday. The recollection came to her with a stab that made her cry out in her wretchedness. They had planned so many sweet things for this day. Now where was she? In the cell of a Buddhist monastery,

imprisoned by fanatical priests, and darker than at any time seemed the prospect of her release.

Two more days passed. The priests came regularly once each day, bringing food and water, but never a word now did they speak even to each other. Once or twice Margaret essayed to question them, but their sullen looks caused the questions to die upon her lips.

Her splendid nerve was failing her at last. It had been six days now since her incarceration, and the bright hope that had buoyed her up from the beginning, the hope of a speedy release, was dying within her. Yet her father and the others assuredly must know by this time of her imprisonment. Surely they were doing everything that could be done to effect her release. She must be patient. It could not be done in one day nor two, nor three, nor in one week; perhaps not even in two weeks. There was the king first to be communicated with, and the machinery of the law to be put into motion, which, at best, she knew, moved but slowly. Yet it was hard to be patient, or even hopeful, amid the gloom of such surroundings.

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Margaret would have found her situation even more terrible to endure could she have known that not only had her loved ones been told that she was dead, but they had been dismissed suddenly from the monastery by the haughty abbot, who declared that he no longer had room for them.

Another day dawned. Margaret awoke from a troubled sleep in the early hours of the morning. The atmosphere of the cell had grown very oppressive. She seemed almost gasping for breath. This was strange, since heretofore she had found the cell fairly well ventilated.

Margaret sat up suddenly, pushing the damp hair back from her forehead. At that very moment she caught the sound of a low rumbling, as of the far away discharge of heavy artillery, though it seemed to be deep down in the earth. The floor swayed beneath her with a sensation that made her sick and dizzy, then shook as though some mighty giant had it in his grasp. Simultaneously there came the grinding, rending noise of walls falling apart, then one mighty crash, the violence of which threw Margaret back

again upon her pallet of straw matting deaf to all further sound. She was, in truth, shocked into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGEWAYS

It was a long time before Margaret regained consciousness. Then she did not at once rise from her pallet, but lay gazing about her in a stupefied manner. A cloud of dust and mortar filled the apartment, and Margaret's eyes, nose and throat were smarting with it. She sat up at length, coughing and almost gasping for breath. Then she discovered another cause of the feeling of suffocation. The lantern, in which the priests had at first placed a little earthenware lamp with oil and wick, but later a candle, had been overturned by a falling stone. In so doing it had set fire to the straw matting, on a part of which Margaret lay. The matting in turn had set fire to the wooden shelf, which, before the earthquake shock, had been in front of the image of Kwan-yin. The rending of the wall had hurled it upon the lantern. A volume of smoke was now spread-

ing through the room, and Margaret made haste to quench the fire. This was soon accomplished by means of the vessel of water.

Then Margaret lighted a candle, for she had her own little match-safe in her pocket. She still felt weak and somewhat dazed from the shock, but there was a wild hope surging through her heart now which lent alertness to her brain and strength to her limbs. Had the earthquake really thrown down part of the walls of the cell? If so, would there be a chance to —— But Margaret scarcely dared put that hope into words.

The newer part of the cell, that is, the three walls of the east wing portion, were but little damaged, and to this circumstance Margaret owed her almost miraculous escape from death. One wall had bulged somewhat, and a stone near the centre had fallen out. The fourth wall, however, the one forming a part of the masonry of the older portion of the monastery—that said to be more than a thousand years old—had been much damaged. The image of Kwan-yin had been hurled forward with such force it had ploughed its way into the brick floor of the cell until the head

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of the god was buried to the shoulders in the débris. Had it gone a little further, it would have maimed Margaret, no doubt for life.

"Has the wall really fallen in at any part?" This was the question burning in Margaret's mind.

She held the candle carefully and made her way to that portion of that wall where the greater damage seemed to have been done. It was near to the angle formed by the junction of this wall with that one of the newer wing lying along the passageway. Stones were piled here in a small heap, and even as Margaret bent nearer another one fell from the wall above, striking the others with a sharp sound and just missing Margaret in its descent.

She raised the candle and peered about her; then a cry of joy, followed quickly by one of dismay escaped her. There was an aperture in the wall, and one through which she could easily crawl, if she could reach it; but the wall was tottering so, there was every evidence it would fall with a crash did she attempt to put her weight upon it. What should she do? The desire to escape was

well-nigh consuming her, yet dared she face the alternative of an almost certain death to attempt it? No, she could not be so rash as that, as strong as was the yearning within her for freedom.

She stepped back with another despairing cry. How tantalizing it was to have that opening there, while at the same time she dared not avail herself of it!

As she drew further back, her eyes still fixed wistfully upon the opening in the wall above her, the hand that held the candle rested suddenly against the niche in which the image of Kwan-yin had so lately been. Immediately Margaret became conscious of a draught that almost blew out the flame of the candle. Turning her head quickly to ascertain the cause, she felt her heart begin again to beat furiously with joy. The masonry that had filled in this niche at the back had been almost entirely dislodged, disclosing an opening that at one time undoubtedly formed a low doorway.

Protecting the flame of the candle with her palm, Margaret leaned as far through it as she could for the stonework which rose as an ele-

vated sill some three feet above the floor. To Margaret's increasing delight she discovered there was space beyond this opening.

"I will risk it!" she said bravely. "Anything, except death, is preferable to this awful imprisonment. Besides, if I do not act quickly, the monks may come, and thus shut off whatever hope I have of escape."

Margaret had no idea at that moment of the extent of the damage wrought by the earthquake, especially throughout the older portion of the monastery. She, of course, could not know that passageways were blocked up which, until cleared, completely shut off the monks from the underground portion of the eastern wing of the monastery.

Securing the remaining candle, which had not yet been lighted, and also taking care to deposit in her pocket the fruit and wheaten cake left over from her repast of yesterday, Margaret again approached the alcove where the image of Kwan-yin had so lately been, and cautiously made her way through it.

"If I do succeed in escaping, I shall think the god was a merciful one, after all," she said to herself with a faint smile.

As she had feared, the adjoining apartment into which she had now come proved to be only another cell. Her heart sank as she noted the grim walls about her.

"Have I stepped from one trap to another?" she asked in despair.

But after another and a more careful scrutiny of her surroundings, she found that while three walls of the cell remained almost intact, the fourth and outer one had a great opening made halfway across it. As she held the candle above her head, Margaret could see plainly the cracks in the opposite wall of the passageway against which the stones from this one had been hurled, falling in a heap beside it.

Picking her way cautiously, she passed through the breach in the fallen wall and turned to go along the passage, which she was sure led through the older portion of the monastery and no doubt to a stairway that would carry her above. But she had proceeded only a few paces when she found further progress in that direction stopped by a great mass of *débris* that seemed to be the walls of two cells fallen together.

"It has been more terrible than I thought!" Margaret exclaimed, her face suddenly growing very white. Then she thought of her friends, hoping most fervently that no harm had befallen them.

She returned toward the opening through which she had entered the passageway. Here the obstruction did not seem to be so great. Margaret now recalled that the wall along the passage of the cell she had occupied had remained standing, as had the others within the newer wing. No doubt if she could succeed in climbing over this mass of heaped stones and mortar, she could find a clearer way beyond.

She began the ascent, picking her way slowly and with caution, for she also recalled the tottering condition of the wall just within her cell. One false step might dislodge it. After a space of time that seemed to her almost interminable, Margaret reached the summit of the mass of débris. She had now to stoop low to make her way through the tunnel-like space lying between it and the overhead wall. Luckily there was a great beam here which had kept most of the ceiling

at this spot from giving way, though Margaret could see seams and rents in the masonry.

She was no more than halfway down the descent, when a stone on which she had just placed her foot rolled with her and Margaret felt herself falling. She threw out her hand to catch what support she could, and in so doing let the candle slip from her grasp. It was quickly extinguished, and thus in total darkness Margaret felt herself rolling and pitching from stone to stone. She managed, however, to preserve her balance to a certain extent, though finally, as she came to a sudden halt, it was to find herself upon her knees, which were smarting from the bruises they had received. Still upon her knees, Margaret reached out feeling for the floor of the passage, against which she was almost sure she had fallen. She was not mistaken, her hand quickly coming in contact with its surface. She had lost her candle, but fortunately she had another. As quickly as she could, she lighted this one, and slowly raised it, looking carefully about her.

She had no more than done this when a

sharp cry escaped her, and she came near dropping the candle in the shock she had received. It was no wonder she cried out, for lying no more than five feet away from her was a priest, stretched upon his back. There could be no mistaking that rigid pose and the gleaming pallor of the upturned face, seen more clearly in the candle's rays, as Margaret raised herself and leaned forward for a nearer view.

He was quite dead. She was altogether sure of it now. A flying stone had struck him upon the head and he had been hurled backward, dying almost instantly, as was apparent from the appearance of the body.

"He was coming along the passageway from the wing," said Margaret, still contemplating him with pitying eye and loudly beating heart. "Can there be means of egress through this wing? Surely there must be! Yet was he really coming in this direction?" It was like a cloud dimming her hope as she thought it might have been otherwise. Perhaps, after all, the priest had come through the older portion of the monastery, and had turned about to open the door of her cell, was in fact in the

very act of doing so when the shock came and the fatal stone had struck him.

Yet Margaret would not give up hope. There must be outlet in this direction. These Buddhist monasteries, she had heard, were completely honeycombed with secret stairways and passages. There was one in particular in the Diamond Mountain region that was said to contain several miles of underground tunnelings. The priests, it was stated, could enter and leave the monastery by means of a dozen different passages without any one but themselves being any the wiser. No doubt this one, too, had many ways of entering and leaving it. If only she kept up a stout heart and remained alert, she would surely find some means of escape from this Buddhist prison, growing more and more of a torture every moment she remained in it.

Her first desire was to search for the lost candle, which she felt sure she would need. She searched patiently, but in vain. Just as she was giving up in despair, she detected it lying deep down in a crevice of the débris, from which she had considerable trouble in extracting it.

She was passing on, when some impulse caused her to pause and cast another pitying look upon the dead monk. She was standing now very near the body, and his rigid face showed distinctly in the candle-light. He was not one of those who had come to the cell to bring her food and water, she felt sure.

As Margaret lowered the candle to pass on, her heart still full of pitying thoughts of the poor creature who had met so tragic a death, the sadness came to sudden end in the wild cry of joy that sprang to her lips. Something near to the outstretched hand of the monk, and flashing in the candle's beams, had caught her eye. It was a bunch of keys; one quite massive, suggesting almost the door of a fortress, and two others much smaller, yet also suggesting strength and locks no light turning would open.

"Hurrah!" Margaret cried, as she caught them up. "Perhaps these are the keys of some of the outer doors!" At any rate she decided to take them with her.

She went on now with lighter step. There were few signs of the earthquake in this portion of the building. Now and then a stone

or little heaps of mortar lay in her path. She could see, too, occasional rents in the walls as she flashed the candle-light upon them. She had gone only about thirty feet or so when she came to another passageway crossing at right angles the one she had been threading. Should she turn down it to left or right, or should she continue to follow this one. After a moment of hesitation the decision came to try this one so far as it went. If at its ending she did not find an outlet, she would retrace her steps, to try each of the other passageways in turn. Some forty feet beyond this angle, she came to yet another passageway crossing in the same manner. Again the resolution was formed to stick to the first passageway until she had fully explored it.

All this while Margaret had not been without the dread of discovery. She constantly looked behind her as though expecting to see one or more of the priests looming up in pursuit. It made her nervous, too, to approach one of the diverging passageways, for she did not know at what moment certain of the monks, on their rounds, might come suddenly from out the shadows and confront her.

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Suddenly, as Margaret pressed on through the passageway, which now seemed to widen out somewhat, she caught a sound that made her heart leap to her throat. Was it a footstep? and was she indeed followed?

"Why, it is water!" exclaimed Margaret after another moment of intent listening. "There it is again! It sounds like water that is trickling down some surface. Where can it be?"

She pressed forward, her candle held well in front of her. The passageway had perceptibly widened. A few more paces and she emerged suddenly into what seemed a vast apartment with high, vaulted roof. The sound had now grown much more distinct. There was unmistakably running water at hand, but now it sounded more like water that lapped a shore. Suddenly a remembrance flashed upon Margaret.

"It must be the underground stream about which Kang told Arthur," she exclaimed; "the one, as he declared, that had a secret landing in or near to the monastery, known only to the priests and a few others."

Margaret paused, her heart beating as

though it were in her throat. Even if boats were there, would it be possible for her to find her way out by this subterranean stream? Almost at the moment of asking the question, Margaret realized the difficulty of the undertaking, since Kang had also added the information that the subterranean passage was quite intricate and hard to follow without the guidance of one who knew it well. "Yet," she resolved, her lips firmly pressed together and her heart swelling with a superb courage, "if after trying all the passageways, I find no means of escape, I will return and trust myself to the stream, provided, of course, that I find a boat."

A boat was there, she saw in a few moments, and not only one, but two. For as she held the candle aloft, advancing across the vaulted space, the gleaming of circling water caught her eye, and just beyond the ripple of waves as they lapped the shore, were two small boats gently swaying at anchor.

Margaret sprang forward, and stood for an instant regarding the stream and its craft with misty eyes and a heart beating loudly. Why

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not risk it now? Perhaps if she went back along the passageways, seeking other outlet, she would be discovered and seized again and returned to prison. Rather than face this possibility, she felt that she would prefer to trust herself a dozen times to the underground stream. The current flowed outward, of course, and it must empty into the Han; and it no doubt made considerable descent ere it reached the river. Perhaps if she kept her wits about her, she might follow the channel safely.

She turned aside, and lowering her light began to make closer survey of the shore of the stream. How were the boats fastened? Would it be easy to release one of them? And then she became aware that there was yet another boat. It had been drawn ashore to some little distance beyond the water line. It was smaller than either of the others, and it seemed to Margaret that this might the better serve her purpose. But would she be able to pull it to the water's edge and launch it? She approached it, holding the light for closer inspection.

The boat lay imbedded in the sand, and it

did not take Margaret long to discover that it had been there for a long while. The boat, too, showed the ravages of time. Its timbers were beginning to fall apart; its once spick-and-span coat of white and blue paint had cracked and peeled.

Something in the appearance of the boat caused Margaret to drop suddenly to her knees beside it, uttering a sharp cry.

"Oh, can it be?" she gasped. "But no, it surely is impossible!"

She held the candle nearer still, so near that had the boat been a living creature, it must have cried out under the pain of the flame's heat.

Margaret's eyes followed the track of light. Intently they searched each plank of the little boat. Suddenly the candle dropped from her grasp as though its scorching flame had swept over her fingers. It fell to the sand and lay there sputtering, threatening each moment to go out. But Margaret paid no heed. She had found something which for the moment rendered her as motionless as the boat itself, so overwhelming was the discovery.

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Along the plank, just below the gunwale of the little craft, she had traced the letters she sought, dim with age, it is true, but nevertheless there—"THE PHILIPPA."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE VOICE THROUGH THE GRATING

It was indeed the little boat belonging to the Philippa ; the one in which Walter Griffin had made short journeys along the river while the sampan was at its moorings. How well Margaret remembered the natty little craft ! for it was by means of it the young artist had sought the sampan the morning they had stood along the shore to bid him good-bye. The sampan had been moored some yards away in charge of the polemen.

This smaller boat had been an afterthought, and a very happy one, young Griffin declared.

“ With it,” he had said, “ I can go out into all sorts of nooks and corners where we would not dare take the sampan.”

Now here it lay deeply imbedded within the sand along the shore of the subterranean stream, at the landing-place within the monastery.

“ How had it come here ? ”

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This question had awakened a tumult within Margaret's heart.

She picked up the candle, which now had almost sputtered itself out, and bent again for an inspection of the little craft. As she did so, an article of clothing caught her eye. Quickly she reached out to take it, yet almost reverently. She laid it down again in a moment, a sob catching in her throat. It was a man's coat, apparently thrown carelessly down, and well she remembered the blue and black mixture of the soft woolen fabric, though the dust and cobwebs of time lay thick upon it. Walter Griffin had had just such a coat as that when he went away.

Overcome by the discovery, Margaret sank again to her knees, her heart beating so loudly it seemed like the rapid tapping of a hammer.

"What did it mean? What was the little boat, with the coat thrown carelessly down within it, doing here?"

As Margaret again asked the question, light seemed breaking. Again there rushed back upon memory certain words spoken by the abbot during the bitter denunciation in the Hall of Judgment. Once or twice during her

imprisonment she had recalled these words, with a feeling that awakened her heart into a sudden tumultuous beating, but each time the strange thoughts had passed away as soon as the recollection of her own troubles returned with overwhelming force. Some one else had been guilty of a deed like hers, the abbot had declared. Some one else had met with the same punishment; and the abbot had denounced them both as being of the "same hated breed!" O could it be ——?

Margaret's thoughts stopped midway of the question, for now she caught a sound that filled her with alarm. There was a noise in the passage beyond as of hurrying feet, though they seemed to be light feet. Instantly she extinguished the candle, and, creeping around to the other side of the boat, sank down, crouching close against it. If the person approaching bore a light, she would not be seen so easily, as she would be shielded by the boat.

Suddenly she caught again and more distinctly the swift rushing of feet, which unmistakably were now coming straight toward her. What could it mean? Had she waited

too long to extinguish the candle? Its circle of flame had no doubt betrayed her. She sank still further down upon the sand, almost outstretched upon it, in fact, and buried her face within her hands, waiting.

There was a sudden cessation of the noise. The person, if person it were, seemed to have come to a standstill, as though debating in which direction to turn his footsteps in the search for her.

Margaret opened her eyes and raised her head a little. She caught no reflection of a light. What could it mean? She sat up now so as to have a more extended view. As she did so her hand, on one finger of which she wore a small, plain gold ring, came in contact with a bit of metal riveting the planks of the boat. It sent forth a sharp, clinking sound. In the deep silence that prevailed, the noise seemed to Margaret many times intensified. She awaited results with breath quick indrawn. Had other ears caught the sound, and would it serve to locate her whereabouts?

Almost ere the question was completed, she heard again the rush of feet. Then, as her heart beat wildly, and she crouched again, her

head bowed upon her hands, trying to prepare herself for the blow that surely must fall now, there was the sudden weight of a body springing forcefully against her. She waited for the hands to seize her—but oh, could it be? What was the meaning of this wild demonstration of joy? of a little hairy body tumbling against her in a frenzy of excitement and delight? of a warm, moist tongue bathing her face and hands with caresses? of a quivering, high-pitched voice speaking all the love-words known to its language?

“Hans! Hans!” cried Margaret, as she caught the little hairy body to her heart and hugged it so tightly that the voice of joy changed to a yelp of pain. “Oh Hans, precious doggie! can it be possible?”

So soon as she could relight the candle, being sadly retarded in the effort by her own trembling fingers and the dog’s further demonstrations of joy, she saw that it was Hans, true enough. Yes, it was indeed the little shaggy Scotch terrier who had gone with Walter Griffin on that last trip up the river, and whom they had believed sleeping the last sleep with his master deep down under the waters of the

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Han. Since Hans was alive, and not dead as they had believed, might not his master —— ?

Margaret got up, white and trembling, but there was a warm scarlet line burning where her lips were pressed resolutely together.

Seeing her movement, Hans gave a quick, glad bark and darted ahead.

“ Not so fast, Hans ! ” she called to him, and her voice quivered.

He seemed to understand, and slackened his pace, but, as he moved on again, he kept looking back anxiously. Surely she knew he wanted her to follow him.

A tumult of emotions swept over Margaret, as she held the candle carefully and endeavored to follow the little dog with as steady a step as she could command. Excitement, joy, anticipation were uppermost ; nevertheless, there was, too, a feeling of dread. So far she had escaped detection by the monks, yet if she returned to the passageways, might she not be discovered ? Yet how could she draw back in face of that which the appearance of the little dog promised ? No, no ; she must not turn coward now, she must go on despite the danger to herself.

Hans suddenly darted down the first crossing of the passageways, and to the right. It had been on Margaret's left as she went toward the subterranean stream.

Margaret still held tightly to the bunch of keys. After all, the great key might only be the one to unlock the door of Yo-do-ki's cell. Yet there were the other two, and for sake of these, which might unlock doors of passageways, she kept close clasp of all.

At the third door down the passageway Hans suddenly stopped with a sharp little yelp of joy. Then he began to scratch vigorously at the lower grating of the great barred door, turning his head at quick intervals to gaze beseechingly at Margaret. There was a light in the cell, which showed faintly through the closely grated door.

"What is it, Hans? What is it?" cried Margaret in low, quivering voice, as she bent above the little dog. "What is it you are trying so hard to tell me, doggie?"

Not yet could she risk her voice in louder tones, for she did not know who might be within the cell, nor in the other cells near.

"Be still, Hans," she said again to the dog,

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"let us be more cautious." She could scarcely speak the words, her heart was beating so.

But now another voice spoke to the dog, a voice within the cell, and at sound of it Margaret sprang up, straightening herself as though an electric shock had passed through her.

"Is that you, Hans? Have you really come back, you rogue? Well, you'll have to wait now for the monks to bring our daily bread and water, before you can get in again. In the meantime, you rascal, as I know you'll be hungry, I'll pass you out some of the cakes."

There was a movement within as though the speaker approached the door.

Like the sudden flashing of light the thought came to Margaret of the great key! She would try it, for it might not, after all, be the key to the cell of Yo-do-ki.

At last, after a time of mighty tugging, into which she threw not only all the physical strength of which she was capable, but the full force as well of her resolute will, Margaret felt the key turning in the lock. The door opened slowly, and then only because of the full pressure she exerted upon it. In her effort to

open the door, her candle had fallen and was extinguished.

Hans was the first to enter, darting swiftly through the aperture so soon as it was large enough to admit him.

Margaret saw the figure within stoop for a moment to caress the little dog. Then he suddenly straightened himself, and, stepping further backward from the door, folded his arms and awaited the will of the priests, as he thought.

The earthenware lamp burning within the oiled paper lantern, gave but a dim light, but it was sufficient for Margaret to see the figure of the cell's occupant. His hair fell upon his shoulders, his beard was long and ragged, his face had an almost deathly pallor, and he was clothed in monk's robes. Margaret's heart was beating almost to suffocation. The walls of the grated door, the pallid face all swam before her eyes, then she made a desperate effort and recovered herself. Suddenly her voice sobbed through the room,

"Oh, Mr. Walter! Mr. Walter! At last! at last! Can it really be true?"

It was Walter Griffin, the young man for

whom brother and friends, and even the law, had searched in vain for years, yet who was found at last through a young girl's loyalty and courage.

He uttered a low cry and sprang forward, putting out his hands in a piteous, groping way as though his senses were benumbed by the suddenness of this overwhelming joy. Up to this moment he had not seen her clearly, as she had remained partly shielded by the door. Now as he heard her voice and saw her fully as she stepped away from the door toward him, the cry was repeated, and with more intensity.

"Margaret!" he gasped. "Little Margaret Vance! Is it possible? Am I not dreaming?"

Margaret caught the hands extended to her. She pressed her forehead down upon them, great sobs swelling in her throat.

"To think," she cried, "that I should have been the one to find you!"

He released his hands, and, putting his arm about her, drew her to him and kissed her. His own eyes were raining tears.

"Margaret, dear child," he said softly,

brokenly, "can it indeed be you?" Then he added more firmly, "But tell me, my child, how did this happen? How did you ever come here? It certainly is most astounding!"

As rapidly as she could Margaret told the story of the little sampan party and its journey from Seoul. All the while she was oppressed by the fear that if they lost precious time in lingering here they would be discovered, and thus all hope of escape be cut off. Thus she urged their departure even while she talked to him, concluding the account, in fact, as they went along the passageways. They had taken the precaution to relock the door of the cell and Margaret had again the keys in her hand.

His own story he told her in snatches as they moved on near together and conversing in low tones. He had indeed been at the monastery, as Kingen had said, and there had been a quarrel with the abbot. That ecclesiastical dignitary accused him of prying into matters that did not concern him, and plainly intimated to him that he must be gone.

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"No doubt I did pry," admitted young Griffin, "for I was wild to obtain inside information concerning certain mystic rites of the priests. It was the final touch desired for the book I had in preparation, and would make a stir in the world, I was sure. That this incontrollable desire led to my final undoing, I see you have guessed. I did go away from the monastery just as Kingen, the little maid, related to you. But that same evening I returned, not openly, but secretly. It was by way of the subterranean passage, of which my servant, Won-su, had told me, and which he declared he knew. It was on that very evening, I had learned, that the mystic rites were to be celebrated.

"My sampan was moored up stream from the monastery, and only a mile or so from the mouth of the cavern that gives entrance to the secret waterway. The abbot, I knew, would not expect me to leave the vicinity until the next day. In the meantime I resolved upon a most reckless plan to be an eye-witness of the mystic rites known as the 'Judgment of the Buddha,' the same, dear child, that proved your own undoing.

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"I had among my effects in the sampan the robes of a Buddhist priest, and also a cowl worn by them during certain stages of penance. Thus disguised, I took the little boat, and, bribing Won-su to accompany me in another little craft belonging to one of the polemen, I set out for the monastery just as dusk had fallen.

"Later, I will tell you all the events of that undertaking, Margaret. Suffice it now to say that my plans carried well up to the final moment of discovery. Disguised as a priest, I passed through the corridors with the others, though I did not dare go so far as to present myself among them at the altar. I concealed myself near by the canopy, and but for the sudden flashing up of the red light and my own imprudence in exposing myself just at that moment, I believe that I would have succeeded in getting through safely."

All this while Hans had been frisking about the feet of his master and Margaret with the greatest delight. His instinct told him that this was a joyous quest on which they were now bound, the quest for freedom. Suddenly his master stooped and patted him.

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"Had Hans been with me in the hall," he continued, addressing Margaret, "I would, no doubt, have had him to blame for my capture. But I had left him in the little boat, to guard my coat."

"The coat is there yet," said Margaret.

"That is lucky. It will be a relief to have even a part of civilized dress again."

"I wonder that you risked leaving the craft and the coat there in such plain view of the priests," remarked Margaret suddenly.

"O I did not do that," he replied smiling. "That would indeed have been a bad error, Meg, after all the careful planning. When I had landed, Won-su took the boats and returned along the stream a short distance to a place of concealment he knew. He had emphatic orders not to let Hans leave him. By the way, the little rogue invited himself to accompany us, keeping concealed under my coat until we were well under way."

The young man stooped again to pat the shaggy little friend who had so faithfully and cheerfully shared his imprisonment for all these years.

"As hour after hour passed away, and I did

not return, Won-su no doubt, growing alarmed and believing the worst had happened to me, went away at last. He did not do this, however, I think, until he had moored the little craft where I could plainly see it and make use of it, in the event that I did, in time, escape. The priests, no doubt, drew it ashore, and their superstitions have prevented their making way with it."

"But what of Hans?" asked Margaret, still perplexed with reference to the little dog.

"When I reached my cell, Margaret, in charge of the priests," replied Walter Griffin, his voice dropping again to its tone of sadness, "Hans was there in the corridor, and he has been with me ever since. He doubtless scented my coming, as he no doubt scented you, I am sure," the young man continued, and in a brighter voice. "At any rate, his actions of this morning, unaccountable then, are very clear to me now. I have noticed for the past three or four days that he has been quite restless, running to the grating at intervals and sniffing and barking. I thought at first the priests might have a dog somewhere in the passageways or in

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one of the cells. It is not uncommon for them to do this. But this morning when he picked his chance and darted out after the priests, I didn't know what to think. Then came the earthquake, and I feared my little dog might have come to grief. The earthquake no doubt stunned and confused him, so that he was longer in getting upon your trail than he would otherwise have been."

CHAPTER XXV

THE OPENING OF THE DOOR

"So there were two priests," said Margaret suddenly, "I mean two who went to your cell with food and water."

"Yes, they always came in pairs," he added with a faint smile, "for fear I should overpower them and seek to escape."

"Then I wonder where the other one can be?" Margaret looked about her apprehensively, as though fearing this one, at least, having escaped, might even then be returning with others to block their further progress. And freedom now seemed so near and so sweet!

"He no doubt went by another passageway, and thus escaped; or he may have shared the fate of his companion."

"I don't want him to die," said Margaret earnestly, "but I do pray fervently that he may not be the means of our recapture."

"Amen, Margaret! From the length of

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time, however, that has elapsed since the earthquake shock, with no signs, as yet, of the priests, I am led to hope that the passageways between this newer wing and the older portion of the monastery are completely blocked."

This proved to be the case.

In the first moments that the question of escape had been touched upon by Margaret, Walter Griffin had exclaimed,

"The underground stream! That is the only hope for us, my child. We'll never succeed by way of the monastery. There are too many risks."

But did he know the way out by means of the subterranean stream? It seemed to him in those first bright moments, when hope beckoned alluringly, that he did. Yet he was not so sure after the stream was reached and he found himself with Margaret and Hans in one of the boats of the monks, the oars in his hands. Won-su had guided him through its intricate ways of the water passage, yet he had kept close note of its every winding, he believed. At any rate, there would be little paddling to do, as they were

going down stream all the time. The chief thing was to guide the boat and to keep it as near the centre of the channel as possible. If this were not done it might strike suddenly against some projecting ledge and its occupants come to grief.

They had taken the lantern from Walter Griffin's cell, and Margaret still had the ends of her two precious candles. While young Griffin directed the course of the boat, Margaret held the light. As to Hans, he seemed to be playing the part of skipper and to be directing everything.

They now had better opportunity to converse, and as the little boat glided silently on, they made good use of it.

Won-su's conduct as depicted by Margaret was inexplicable to young Griffin. He had always found his Korean servant faithful in every particular.

"And I believe he was really fond of me," the young man concluded.

They talked further of Won-su and his strange behavior. Then the subject of the wrecking of the sampan was reached. Suddenly young Griffin exclaimed,

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"I believe I see things more clearly now. Won-su summoned up the courage to go to the monastery and ask about me. The abbot made him believe I was dead. It was the safe way; the only way, in fact, to successfully block enquiry so far as the monastery was concerned."

"But the wrecking of the sampan is still a mystery," declared Margaret; "for Dr. Charles has told us again and again that the investigation proved very strongly it was wilfully done. Then there is Myo's—I mean Won-su's own guilty behavior. Indeed he acted like an insane man as he neared that portion of the river where, it now seems, your sampan was really wrecked. Then think how he jumped over the cliff when I called him by his true name."

"It is all very strange," agreed young Griffin. "The most grievous part of it to me now," he added sadly, "is that all my work of years is lost! for my precious manuscripts together with all the sketches I had made with such care, no doubt went to the bottom of the river."

"That is too bad!" Margaret said sorrowfully.

"Then there was the treasure of gold nuggets. O Margaret, how I had counted on that!"

The tone of his voice, the expression of his face, showed that he was thinking of another besides himself; of one very dear.

But Margaret was too excited to note. Another thought had come to her.

"And Mr. Walter," she cried, her voice rising sharply, "all the polemen who could afterward be found declared that you went down with the sampan. Some of the spectators, too, said the same thing."

Young Griffin's face cleared suddenly.

"All a plot of the priests, as I now believe," he said. "The abbot is wily enough for anything."

Following an inclination she had had before, Margaret now asked about Pop-hung.

"I did stay with him," replied Walter Griffin, "and the story about the easel is true. I intended to pick it up on my way back. But Pop-hung, like the abbot, is tricky, though I do not believe he could be guilty of genuine

crime, as could the abbot. But the fact is Pop-hung was hanging about the neighborhood of the sampan for two or three days prior to the one on which I made that fatal return to the monastery. He professed to have some business with Won-su, who was an old friend ; but I had the uneasy feeling that the rogue coveted the golden nuggets."

Suddenly young Griffin straightened himself and gazed about him anxiously. Then, as a look of apprehension came into his face, an exclamation escaped him.

"What is wrong?" asked Margaret.

He did not reply at once. When he did, she noted the unsteadiness in his voice.

"It does not seem to me that this is the same part of the stream through which we came, I mean Won-su and myself. It hasn't a familiar look."

"Why, how can you tell, anyway?" replied Margaret. It all looks alike to me."

"But not to me, or at least it ought not. As we came through I noted certain features which we ought, by this time, to have seen, that is if we are going right."

The last half of the sentence seemed to be

added reluctantly, and it was no more than out, when young Griffin rested his paddle against a ledge near which they were passing, and, holding the boat thus, gazed straight at Margaret.

"The truth is, Margaret," he began and avoiding her eyes now, "I have more than the suspicion that we are going wrong, I am convinced that we are. I fear I did not take the right turning at the start." He paused, then added, "But I cannot bear to go back now. It seems such a risk."

"Then let us go on," replied Margaret steadily.

"But we do not know where this passage leads; perhaps into greater dangers than if we returned. The stream may drop suddenly over a precipice."

"Oh, we could hear the roar of the water in time," was the courageous reply. "Let us go on, until we are certain danger confronts us. The passage may, after all, lead out through some other way than the one by which you entered."

He looked at her, his eyes glistening.

"You are a girl in a hundred, Margaret!" he declared admiringly.

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"Why not make it a thousand, while you are about it?" she asked in bantering tones.

The fact was, she felt as uneasy as Mr. Walter seemed to be, but she would not let him see it. He looked so frail, as if barely strong enough for the task before them. It was plain that his long imprisonment had been a heavy drain upon him.

"If I made it a million I would come nearer the number!" he declared, his eyes suddenly brightening. "Can I ever forget, Margaret, what you have done for me?"

Margaret looked away for a moment. There was a vibration in her voice as she spoke.

"I'm afraid," she confessed, "that I did not do it as much for you as for ——"

His own heart began to beat rapidly. There was a new quick kindling in his eyes.

"As for whom, Margaret?"

"Aunt Philippa," she said softly. "She made me promise I would let no opportunity pass to learn all I could. Do you know, Mr. Walter," broke off Margaret suddenly, and turning to look straight into his eyes, "I don't believe Aunt Philippa has ever really believed that you were dead."

"God bless her for it!" he said in shaking voice. His eyes glowed, his face was flushed. He seemed more resolute now, as though he returned to his task with greater energy. Yet, had he known it, their surroundings at that moment promised anything else but hope.

"There's something ahead," said Margaret suddenly; "it's right across the stream."

For the last few moments she had been peering out over the bow of the boat, straining her eyes through the gloom.

"There! I see it more plainly now. It seems to be a flight of stone steps."

And so it indeed proved, for soon the nose of the little craft grated against it. It was evidently a landing-place, for there were iron rings to which boats could be fastened.

Young Griffin took the lantern from Margaret, and, while she steadied the boat by means of the paddle, he carefully studied their surroundings.

"We have certainly come to the end of our way in this direction, Margaret," he said after a moment. "The walls shut us in here on every side but one. We must either go back

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along the way we have come, or up the stairway."

"Let us at least make an examination of the stairway." Then, as her face suddenly brightened, she added, "I have heard that the monastery has more than one secret stairway leading to cliffs where certain shrines are set. There is one in particular that leads to a promontory where the abbots and sub-abbots are interred. If we reach that, we may find means to escape from the other side."

The little boat was now secured to one of the rings, and with more hopeful hearts they began cautiously to ascend the stairway. It did not follow a straight course, but began gradually to curve. When about thirty of the steps had been climbed, they came out suddenly into a circular apartment with a concave ceiling. It seemed built chiefly of wood, most elaborately carved. The walls were of a material that glistened in the lantern light. Set at intervals around the walls were various images. In the centre of the apartment a great gilded dragon with outstretched wings barred their further progress. There was an altar in front of it, and a half-

circular frame on either side richly gilded and holding candles in ebony sticks.

"This may be the mortuary chapel," said young Griffin after a pause in which each was taking careful note of the surroundings. "That immense ebony pedestal looks something like a catafalque. Perhaps the body of each abbot rests here for a time on its way to interment. Courage, dear Meg, we shall no doubt soon come out at the cemetery!"

Moving cautiously, and still talking in whispers, they found that there were two outlets from the apartment in addition to the one by which they had come. One door opened into a passageway that seemed to lead straight from it; a second disclosed the continuance of the stairway above.

"Shall we go straight forward," asked young Griffin, "and find out where this passageway leads?"

"No, no," spoke Margaret decisively, "I am so afraid if we do, we'll find ourselves back in the monastery. Let us continue to go up."

Other steps were cautiously climbed, but not so many; then another circular apartment, not so large as the other, but similarly

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adorned. Still other steps, and yet another apartment, and in this there were dragons everywhere visible. On making a closer examination of the walls of this apartment, they found that they were of marble and not so blackened by the smoke of burning incense.

A suspicion had taken hold of Margaret, but she said nothing of it as yet. She was beginning to feel so anxious about her companion that she lost sight of all else for a time. He was not showing the strength nor the freshness of spirit with which he had started out. In truth, during the last few minutes both had failed him very perceptibly. His steps had begun to lag, his face was of an almost livid pallor, and he was panting for breath.

“O Mr. Walter!” exclaimed Margaret, as she quickly grasped his arm, “do let me help you. I forgot how weak you must be from staying in prison so long. I have been going too fast for you, I am sure. And it has been a tough climb. I declare I’m out of breath myself.”

“Do not mind me, Meg,” he begged, and trying to encourage her with a smile. “I

shall be all right again when we are up this ascent and I get my breath again. But see, my child, what is this? The light of day! Surely my eyes do not deceive me! It is, Margaret! It is! O how sweet to see God's sunlight again! There, Meg, put out your lantern. We shall have no use for it now, for we are saved!"

He sank down upon the floor as he ceased speaking, for the reaction was too much for him.

"Let us rest just a little while," he said entreatingly, "and then we'll go on. It is all clear to us now."

But Margaret did not yield to his persuasion. She could not, for she had seen what he had not; and seeing it, had grown sick with despair. Her suspicion had now grown to a certainty. They had come out into the marble pagoda! and had entered the chamber at the top, which was furnished with half-circular openings to admit light and air. It was this light that young Griffin had seen as he came to the top of the steps, and believed it a glimpse of the outside world into which they would soon pass and be free.

She would not yet undeceive him. Let him revel a little longer in this thought as he took the rest he needed so much.

There were six of the crescent-shaped openings through which the circular chamber was flooded with light. They were about two feet across at their widest opening, and were set at such a distance from the floor that, as Margaret approached one of them and leaned cautiously out, the lower portion caught her just below the shoulders.

She had heard Arthur and Wilbur say that the marble pagoda stood in a secluded portion of the grounds looking off toward the mountains. It was not likely then that any of the priests would see her, yet Margaret was very cautious in her movements. She could see nothing from this side, for there was a steep cliff in the way, with many trees crowning it. She passed across to the other side, and now a sharp exclamation escaped her. What a glorious view of the mountains! Unconsciously Margaret leaned further out. Then something else besides the mountains caught her gaze. A smoke was curling upward from a spot about half-way down one of the nearest

mountainsides. Suppose it were a camp-fire! It was not much beyond the noon hour, as she had seen some moments ago by her watch. Some prospectors might even now be enjoying their midday meal. She had heard her father say there were one or two parties in the mountains.

Obeying an irresistible impulse, Margaret leaned out as far as she dared and waved her handkerchief. Again it fluttered, and yet again. It seemed an absolute piece of folly, as she realized in a moment afterward, for how would it be possible for them to see it, and under the eaves, too? And even if they did see it, what would it amount to?

A sound in young Griffin's direction attracted her attention. She turned, and then with a quick cry sped toward him. His head had fallen backward, and he was gasping for breath. As Margaret reached him, his eyes closed, a spasm passed over his face. But for the strong, young arms placed so quickly about him, he would have fallen over, no doubt striking his head heavily upon the floor.

Margaret knelt beside him, supporting his

weight against her. She called to him again and again, but there was no response. Her heart was beating rapidly, and there was a choked feeling in her throat. Had he only fainted, or was he in reality dead? Margaret would not entertain this last supposition for one moment. Arms and hands were supple, and she believed that he was still breathing, though so faintly that she could not be sure.

Margaret worked over him faithfully. A half hour passed, then three-quarters, ere her efforts were fully rewarded. He opened his eyes and spoke her name.

"I'm afraid I fainted," he said. "Prison fare and that sudden rush of sunlight and air were too much for me. But come! we must be going. We have waited too long, I am sure. To think we are free at last, Margaret!"

How could she tell him? But bravely it was done. It took him many moments to recover from the crushing blow, then he arose suddenly with much of the old resolution.

"Come, Margaret," he said, almost gaily. "We are not recaptured yet, my dear. Let us try another way, even if we have to go back and begin again at the very beginning,

to the landing within the monastery, in fact."

She was rejoiced to see his old spirit return, but she had little hope now that they would escape. That long delay within the pagoda would no doubt prove fatal.

They had descended the stairway into the first apartment and were turning to seek the flight of steps that led down into the water where the little boat was moored, when, from the direction of the passageway, came a sound that for the instant held them immovable with a sudden paralyzing terror. It was the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps, and not of one person, but of several!

"Quick, Margaret!" Walter Griffin whispered. "We must make a dash for the boat, or we are lost!"

It was too late! for at that very moment the door was flung open and two priests appeared upon the threshold, bearing torches. And behind them was the astonished, livid face of the abbot!

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAST OF THE CHANG-SOP

YES, there were the priests, and there, too, was the abbot! yet who was this pressing so close upon him? And yet another and another of the dear familiar faces; Arthur, her father, Wilbur, Stephen, Dr. Griffin, the young engineer, Ernest Warren, and even Sarah! Why it was too good to be true!

A boy's high-pitched voice, quivering with emotion, rang through the apartment,

"O Meg, to think it was really you Mr. Warren saw in the pagoda! We didn't believe him when he told us. My, what a lucky thing he had his field-glasses on the pagoda just when you waved! O Meg, you dear old thing—we thought you were dead!"

Arthur was hugging her so closely she had to beg him to give her a chance to breathe.

"And who is this with you?" he cried an instant later, as his eyes fell upon the figure, so strangely robed, which up to this moment had been concealed by the shadows.

Another voice than Margaret's answered the question, for while the words were yet on Arthur's lips, Dr. Griffin sprang forward with a sharp cry,

"Walter! My dear brother! It's Walter, Mr. Vance, Walter!"

As the brothers clasped each other in a close embrace, there was the sound of sobbing in more than one direction, but they were sobs of joy.

And now Margaret was in her father's arms, then in Stephen's, and Wilbur's and Sarah's, and words spoken by each showed how sorely they had one and all grieved for her.

"O it was terrible, Meg!" declared Sarah, sobbing it all out on Margaret's shoulder. "We just would not give up and believe you dead, though those old priests, especially the abbot, did everything they could to prove to us that you were. When they drove us away from the monastery, we took refuge in the camp with Mr. Warren and his prospecting party. To think, Margaret, they have even dragged the river for your body!" and Sarah shuddered.

Margaret had the hand of the young engi-

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neer now, and was shaking it gratefully, while her eyes said more than words could have done.

Questions and answers were flying thick and fast. What an astounding story Margaret had to relate! But only the bare facts could be told here. Later they would hear it all, and that, too, of Walter Griffin. The earthquake had done little damage in the newer parts of the monastery. Neither had those at the camp suffered by it.

The abbot had for some moments been edging around them as they talked, as though he were trying to get behind them into the passageway. He was brought to a sudden standstill by Ernest Warren's firm hand grasping his shoulder.

"No, indeed, old Crop Hair," the young man said determinately. "No you don't. You'd like, no doubt, to call a lot of the monks and shut us up, like our two friends here. But it won't do. You'll stay right here beside me until we get safely out of this old monastery, which is too much like a jail to suit me."

"The abbot didn't want to come with us at all," said Stephen to Margaret. "Mr. Warren

just had to make him do it. The chang-sop declared it was some one of the priests Mr. Warren had seen, by means of his field-glasses, in the old pagoda. I am sure he didn't for a moment expect to find you here, Meg, much less Mr. Walter, or he never would have yielded to Mr. Warren's request."

The abbot's face, livid with rage at this moment, plainly showed that he had indeed been unpleasantly surprised.

Their first thought on coming out of the monastery was of Myo-Sang, or Won-su, as he must now be called. He had recovered consciousness, but one glance of Dr. Griffin's practiced eyes showed him that the old poleman had not long to live. His confession was contrite and full.

Greedy had been the worst sin of which Won-su had been guilty. He had coveted the golden treasures dug by Walter Griffin from the hill of Nippoo-san, and all his scheming had been to possess them. Yet despite his treachery to the young man who had so warmly befriended him, the stolen nuggets had done Won-su little good, for he had used but few of them, no more, in fact, than would have been

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his share for services. Every time he had sought to make use of them, there was the haunting fear of young Griffin to deter him, for Won-su was confident the young artist was dead, and thus in the spirit world would have full knowledge of all his old servant's acts in this one.

The wrecking of the sampan had indeed occurred through the plotting of the priests, in which plot Pop-hung had been an active conspirator. He and the polemen were paid a large sum by the abbot to wreck the boat and to spread the report that the young artist had gone down in the river. Certain of the villagers had also been bribed. Won-su was to have been an accomplice and to have shared the reward, but at the last moment nerve and heart failed him. He had stolen away, bearing the little canvas sack of nuggets and the cherry-wood box containing the sketches and the precious manuscript, which Walter Griffin had more than once begged him to make his special care in the event anything happened to him or to the sampan.

To think that, after all, the box with its precious contents and even the most of the

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nuggets were safe! That they were, in fact, in no less a place of concealment than the Marble Pagoda in Seoul, in a spot well known to Walter Griffin.

Won-su could never get up the courage to carry the cherry-wood box and its contents to Dr. Griffin, as instructed to do, lest he be questioned about the nuggets and also about the master to whom he had proven unfaithful. Two or three times he had gone to the pagoda to get the box for delivery, but each time his courage had failed and he had returned it to its hiding-place. It was at one of these times that Margaret had seen him.

Won-su's visit to Pop-hung had been for the purpose of getting him to join with him—Won-su—in telling the truth about the wreck of the sampan; but Pop-hung had been obstinate. Only on one condition would he yield, and that was that Won-su disclose the whereabouts of the gold nuggets and promise to share them with him. The young artist's people, Pop-hung argued, need never know but that the nuggets had gone to the bottom of the river with the other effects.



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At last they were on board their newly purchased sampan and homeward bound.

"I told you," said Mr. Vance suddenly, as his arm stole fondly about Margaret, "that wise men had declared that one girl of the right sort is worth a dozen boys in any market."

"One of the wise men must be yourself, uncle, I am sure," remarked Wilbur slyly.

"You are right, father," declared Arthur.

"Make it a million, sir, and you will come nearer the number!" exclaimed Walter Griffin in reply to Mr. Vance. "Yes," he added, as his eyes, radiant with gratitude, sought Margaret's, "to me the value of this one girl in question is far above that of the whole world of boys."

